Relevance-Theoretic Comprehension procedures in the analysis of Donald Trump's interview on HBO.

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Abstract

The current study intends to employ relevance-theoretic comprehension procedures on Donald Trump's HBO interview. Sperber and Wilson (1986/1995) proposed the theory as an inference-based framework for examining the cognitive interpretation of language. According to the model, certain procedures can be utilized to arrive at the speaker's intended meaning. These processes include explicature, implicated premises, and implicated conclusions. The model further assumes that the addressee must consider that what others say is relevant in any particular circumstance. It's questionable what governs how well someone understands what a speaker says. The study's methodology uses a descriptive-qualitative approach, and the data came from an interview with Donald Trump conducted on the HBO channel's AXIOS show. This interview took place in the White House on August 3, 2020. The research concludes that relevance-theoretic comprehension procedures can be used to analyze political interviews. Second, the hearer has to work too hard to arrive at the intended meaning of Trump's words because of the loss of ostension caused by his profuse information in interviews.

1. Introduction

Pragmatics is used extensively in this study of interpersonal communication. For the most part, communication has been described as exchanging information between two parties using some linguistic codes. The code model, as defined by Sperber and Wilson(1986), includes this traditional notion. This resulted in the development of an inferential model, which can be seen as a possible substitute for the code model. An inferential model known as Relevance Theory explains that the meaning of an utterance cannot be directly mapped to its grammatical meaning. The human capacity for inference fills the gap between a speaker's intended meaning and the meaning encoded into language. Relevance Theory, devised by Sperber and Wilson to encapsulate the general principles that govern the pragmatic interpretation, demonstrates how communication and arriving at the inferred meaning include linguistic and contextual knowledge. Relevance theory in pragmatics explains how the listener perceives a speaker's utterance. In essence, Sperber and Wilson (1986) asserted that when interpreting utterances, people follow the maximisation of relevance. That is true of both general human cognition and the interpretation of speech. The interpretation with the highest level of relevance has a high cognitive impact with little processing effort. The accessibility of assumptions is a processing effort. Combining existing and newly acquired information results in a cognitive effect. According to relevance theory, an utterance's meaning can be broken down into explicatures and implicatures. Explicatures and implicatures are examples of meanings that have been explicitly and implicitly communicated. To create an explicature from the logical form, several inferential operations, including

disambiguation, reference resolution, saturation, free enrichment, and ad hoc concept generation, must be performed. Next, the implicatures must be identified (implicated premises and implicated conclusions).

Relevance Theory is used in many types of research, particularly concerning their shared interest in political discourse. Although this study is also interested in political discourse, its primary focus is on something else. The political interview as a separate form of political discourse is the primary topic of this article. Since politicians typically express their ambiguous opinions by displaying no cooperation and talking indirectly and evasively, relevance theory as a communicative theory can be used as an appropriate model to analyse political interviews as a particular genre of political discourse. The study establishes that some theoretical hypotheses of Relevance Theory are reasonable for addressing how politicians' evasive language can be explained and interpreted to get at the intended meaning of their statements. When analysing a political interview, the goal is to determine what the speaker is attempting to communicate and their plans for the interview.

2. Relevance Theory

In the 1980s, linguists Deirdre Wilson and anthropologist Dan Sperber developed what is now known as Relevance Theory. Although many others have contributed to its growth, it is most strongly identified with these two names. The article, titled "On Grice's theory of conversation," was published in 1981. They detailed their agreement and disagreement with Grice and why they think his theory needs to be altered. In their book, *Relevance: Communication and cognition* (initially released in 1986 and updated in 1995), they detail their theory, which they propose as a cognitive pragmatic alternative to Grice's Corporation-

ruled explanation of utterance interpretation in place of sentence meaning.

Relevance Theory is based on relevance's definition and two main principles: cognitive and communicative. Grice coined *relevance* in his communication theory. The idea of "relevance" was developed by Sperber and Wilson. Therefore, in their view, The word *relevance* here is not to be understood in its ordinary sense. But instead of a theoretical notion used in the study of human communication. Assimakopoulos (2008:113–114) cites Sperber and Wilson's definition of relevance as a psychological characteristic of cognitive input to mental processing. This stimulus can be recognised in the given context as a communicated speech whose intended meaning needs to be processed. From a relevance-theoretic standpoint, the balance between cognitive impacts and processing effort determines how relevant a speech is to its receiver and, therefore, how worthwhile it is to process.

Sperber and Wilson (1986/1995) proposed relevance principles as another foundation for their theory, which consists of two parts: Cognitive and Communicative. In the realm of cognition, Gaspar (2016:10) asserts that on relevance theory, out of all the inputs accessible at any one time, our cognitive system prefers to process automatically those with the most significant expected relevance and creates a framework that will allow our inference system to maximise the relevance of the input. According to Gigerenzer et al. (1999:21), there comes the point where too much knowledge and information processing can be detrimental. Cognition is the process of concentrating on the relevant and discarding the irrelevant. This concept is summarised in the First Principle of Relevance or the Cognitive Principle of Relevance.

"Human cognition tends to be geared to the maximisation of relevance." (Sperber & Wilson, 1995: 261)

The core of relevance theory is the cognitive idea of relevance, defined as a trade-off between cognitive benefit and processing cost. Using Sperber and Wilson's language (1995), such information produces positive cognitive effects, where a cognitive effect is an effect that causes the individual to modify some of her preconceived notions. It may involve either strengthening or weakening current premises or acquiring new ones (Carston, 2001: 6). A cognitive effect is also considered positive if it contributes to a meaningful influence on the individual's representation of the cognitive world. False conclusions, on the other hand, will affect cognition. Still, not a positive one because a person should not value false conclusions over relevant information "when it is processing in a context of available assumptions yields a positive cognitive effect." (Wilson and Sperber,2004: 608). According to Austin (1987:105), Wilson and Sperber (2004: 609), and Borg (2004: 47), the more contextual effects an utterance generates during processing, the more relevant it is; conversely, the more relevant it is, the less effort is required during processing. Therefore, two clauses make up the concept of an input's relevance to a specific person:

(a) Everything else being equal, the greater the positive cognitive effects achieved in an individual by processing an input at a given time, the greater the relevance of the input to that individual at that time.

(b) Everything else being equal, the smaller the processing effort expended by the individual in

achieving those effects, the greater the relevance of the input to that individual at that time (Wilson and Sperber, 2002: 602).

It seems logical to assume that if one puts in more processing effort, one should anticipate receiving more valuable cognitive effects in return. As was previously stated, the cognitive system of humans typically selects the most pertinent information from the context (Cognitive Principle of Relevance). As a result, the speaker must ensure that their statement satisfies the appropriate criteria for relevance for it to be chosen by the listener as the most relevant input to pay attention to. This claim is the Communicative Principle of Relevance articulated by Sperber and Wilson. Relevance Theory suggests a slightly different theory from Grice's concerning the communication claim. They propose that communication with someone draws the addressee's attention and provides her with (relevant) information. Instead of considering communication between people as cooperative information transfers, they argue that communicating with someone catches her attention and gives her (relevant) information. The Cognitive Principle of Relevance, as stated by Jackson (2016:52-53), directs our processing of all information, including that which has not yet been shared. On the other hand, this idea gives evidence for a more specific communication principle that, according to Sperber and Wilson (1995), explains how we handle information that has been ostensively transmitted. The Communicative Principle asserts:

> ''Every act of ostensive communication communicates a presumption of its optimal relevance'' (Sperber and Wilson,1986, 158; Sperber and Wilson 1995: 260-261).

However, as Sperber and Wilson(1995) point out, the addressee of an ostensive-inferential communication act may or may not be able to provide the addressee with the information most relevant to the communication. An ostensive-inferential communication's addressee may be allowed to seek as much information as is relevant, but the speaker might be unable or unwilling to provide it. He is allowed to request whatever relevant information that is available, though. According to Andersen(2001:20) and Wilson(2011, 203), by simply addressing a person, a speaker establishes an expectation that her utterance will have sufficient contextual effects to be worthwhile for processing for the listener while also causing him no unnecessary processing effort. This assumption is frequently referred to as the presumption of optimal relevance:

a) The ostensive stimulus is relevant enough to be worth the speaker's effort to process it.

> b) The ostensive stimulus is the most relevant one compatible with the speaker's abilities and preferences. (Sperber and Wilson, 1995:270;Wilson and Sperber,2004:612).

The communicative principle of relevance and the idea of optimal relevance suggest a way to do [certain] comprehension procedures and guess what the speaker means. In the next part of the article, the techniques for understanding are further detailed.

2.1 Relevance and Comprehension Procedures

How and when addressees cease processing, why they don't seek more interpretations, and so on, is one of the central questions in pragmatics. According to Moeschler (2007:85), Relevance Theory has

proposed a broad assertion known as the comprehension procedure, which asserts that interpretation develops along the path of least effort. Additionally, Braseth (2010:19) explains that the interpreter is not randomly stumbling through the procedure but rather (involuntarily) adhering to a predetermined plan. This tactic has been dubbed "The least-effort strategy (LES)" by Carston (2002). To be more precise, when a person listens to a statement, they are performing the following:

a. Follow a path of least effort in computing cognitive effects: Test interpretative hypotheses (disambiguations, reference resolutions, implicatures, etc.) in order of accessibility.

b. Stop when your expectations of relevance are satisfied. (Wilson and Sperber, 2004: 613; Wilson, 2010:396)

There should only be one optimally relevant interpretation; therefore, Cruz(2016:10) argues that it is appropriate for listeners to cease when an interpretative hypothesis satisfies their expectations of relevance. A situation where two or more equally plausible interpretations would reduce relevance since listeners would have to expend more mental effort deciding which one to accept. Yus (2006:855) claims that it takes multiple context extensions before an optimum appropriate interpretation can be reached. However, further investigation into other possible interpretations ceases once one interpretation is accepted as correct.

According to Silveira and Feltes (1997, as cited by Schröde and Perna, 2006:6), different people put in different amounts of effort to find the most appropriate interpretation of a given statement. One person may find their needs met quickly, while another may feel the need to keep looking. For this reason, Sperber and Wilson write, "comprehension is a non-demonstrative inferential process, this hypothesis may well be false, but it is the best a rational hearer can do" (Wilson & Sperber, 2004:16). One example of this is the lexical ambiguity in Laura's statement (1), which is discussed in (Jackson, 2016:51):

1) Dave: I can't take you to Starbucks; I haven't got any cash on me.

Laura: Well, you'd better find a bank!

Dave needs to clarify the bank to determine the proposition Laura was trying to convey (1). In descending order of accessibility, he should examine potential interpretive hypotheses. Assumptions regarding where *money* is obtained are already somewhat engaged because Dave has already talked about money. Dave will entertain theories concerning *financial organisations* by taking the easiest route. He would have to process information so that suitable cognitive effects would not count if he thought about riverbank hypotheses. Once the *bank* has been clarified, Dave stops looking for other meanings because his desire for relevance has been met. Continued processing would require effort from Dave that the context's cognitive effects would be unable to make up for.

Because language is frequently ambiguous, comprehending utterances requires processing many contextual subtasks. Recovering the original meaning requires numerous steps, starting with identifying the explicature and moving on to the implicatures (implicated premises and implicated conclusions). Wilson and Sperber detail the steps involved in the understanding process in great detail, breaking them down into the following tasks:

a. Constructing an appropriate hypothesis about explicit content

(**EXPLICATURES**) via decoding, disambiguation, reference resolution, and other pragmatic enrichment processes.

b. Constructing an appropriate hypothesis about the intended contextual assumptions (**IMPLICATED PREMISES**).

c. Constructing an appropriate hypothesis about the intended contextual implications (**IMPLICATED CONCLUSIONS).**

(Wilson and Sperber,2004: 615)

Explicature and implicature are two categories of expressed presumptions or concepts that are essentially differentiated by their respective derivations. In the following section, the researcher will summarize each subtask to illustrate how these notions and their relationship have developed within relevance theory.

2.2. Explicature

The notions of explicature and implicature developed based on Grice's "what is said" and "conversational implicature" are split in Relevance Theory to represent the difference between explicit and implicit communication. According to Sperber and Wilson(1995:182), to describe the speaker's explicit meaning in a way that allows for fuller elaboration than Grice's concept of "what is said," the term "explicature" was entered into relevance theory. According to Sperber and Wilson (1986,1995:182), Austin (1987:109), Blakemore (2002:74), and Cruse (2006:154), the recovery of any assumption contains an element of inference; therefore, they disagree with the conventional view that an utterance's explicit content is a collection of decoded assumptions. Sperber and Wilson (1986, 1995:182) note, "An explicature is a combination of linguistically

encoded and contextually inferred conceptual features."

Explicature is defined as:

An assumption communicated by an utterance is an explicature if and only if it is a development of a logical form encoded by that utterance (Sperber & Wilson, 1986:182)

The most contentious issue has been how to turn a complete proposition from an utterance's logical form. According to Sperber and Wilson (1986/1995:72) and Huang (2007:18), the decoded logical form of an utterance is often an incomplete propositional schema that needs to be inferentially supplemented to achieve full propositional status. In light of this, Sperber and Wilson (1986/1995:72) declare that this enriched proposition—which they call explicature by analogy with implicature—is the only one that may be evaluated for truth or falsity in the current communication. Therefore, they can be helpful to the hearer in interpreting an utterance. Additionally, according to Borjesson (2014:121), it is assumed that an utterance becomes truth-evaluable at the level of explicature. As also stated by Sperber and Wilson:

All conceptual representations have logical properties or 'logical form.' They say that a logical form is "propositional" if it is semantically complete and therefore capable of being true or false, and "non-propositional" otherwise. (Sperber and Wilson,1986:71)

Explicature is a matter of degree. Sperber and Wilson (1986,1995:182) state that the more explicit the explicature, the smaller the relative contribution of the contextual qualities is, and

the converse is equally valid. There is always a linguistic input, but the extent to which it plays a role in the explicature might range from almost absolute determination to virtually no involvement.

2) A. Mary Jones put the book by Chomsky on the table in the downstairs sitting room.

    B. Mary put the book on the table.

    C. She put it there.

    D. On the table.

Each sentence mentioned above can be used in various settings to express the same idea explicitly (assumption or thoughts). More pragmatic inference can be drawn from statements (2c and 2d) than from (2b). In contrast to (2a), which is sufficiently explicit and leaves no space for pragmatic inferences, (2b) is less straightforward.

2.2.1. Explicatures Enrichment Processes

In relevance theory, recovering the meaning of explicatures necessitates more pragmatic processes than resolving ambiguities and assigning references. Explicatures, in general, help to complete and enrich conceptual representations or logical forms into propositional forms in the following ways: (i) disambiguation; (ii) reference resolution; (iii) saturation; (Recanati 1989); (iv) free enrichment; and (v) ad hoc concept generation (Carston 2004).

2.2.1.1 Disambiguation

Disambiguation often includes choosing one sense from the two or more possible meanings in the linguistic system. By selecting a specific interpretation based on circumstances, explicatures will finish the logical form that is not full. (Huang,2007:189). Take into account the instance below:

3) Dr. Martin left the theatre six hours later

The word "theatre" has two possible meanings in the sentence in (3): either "a place

for the performance of plays" or "an operating theatre." The most natural reading of (3) is that Dr. Martin departed the operating room. Why these preferences exist is the question at hand. The 'operating theatre' interpretation of (3) may be preferred because of the implied familiarity with a doctor. It's also not hard to imagine scenarios in which the preferred interpretation would produce at least passable cognitive effects, for example, in (3), implying that the operation was complex and time-consuming. As a result, the resulting interpretation must be accepted by the listener.

2.2.1.2 Reference Resolution

Because the listener is responsible for deducing the referred object from the surrounding context, reference assignment is the least difficult task. Loukusa (2007:44) believes that the most straightforward task is reference assignment because the hearer must infer the referenced object from the context. Even if this is a simple task, Leinonen et al. (2000 cited in Loukusa:2007:44) confirm that context must be utilised because, for example, without context, pronouns have no sense. Reference resolution is possible when the relevant anaphoric or referential statement is given the proper contextual value on the explicit side. (Huang,2007:189) Consider the example given in (Allott, 2013:17):

4) Peter: I'll get it ready in time.

The preceding utterance involves a significant amount of pragmatic labour to recover the notion that the hearer understands the speaker to have intended; in (4), we need to infer to whom "I" and "it" refers, respectively. (In this sentence, "I" refers to Peter, and "it" refers to the car.) The explanation can also include:

5) Peter will get the car ready in time.

2.2.1.3 Saturation
Saturation is a concept borrowed by Relevance Theory from Recanati

(1989), whose theory is very close to Relevance Theory. Saturation, as defined by Recanati (1993: 243), is the pragmatic process by which a particular slot, position, or variable in the linguistically decoded logical form gets filled. Murtisari (2013:326) provides several illustrations of saturation, including the followings:

6). The pyramid of Giza is much older. [than what?]

7) Anna has left her umbrella. [where?]

The preceding statements do not yet have fully formed logical structures, but the gaps in these structures can be filled by referring to the context of the communication. For example, in (6), the Great Pyramid of Giza is considerably older than the *Temple of Borobudur*, and in (7), Anna has forgotten her umbrella *in the classroom*.

2.2.1.4 Free Enrichment

Recanati's concept of "free enrichment" was adopted in (2004). According to Huang (2007:191), the logical form of the statement presented must be conceptually enriched in the explicature, even if the linguistically decoded logical form of the sentence does not appear to have an overt indexical or a covert slot. Murtisari (2013:326) shows that in saturation, the slots are given by the language, but in "free enrichment," the slots are hidden. Two types of free enrichment are recognised in the literature on relevance theory. The first type is one in which the concept that the speech encodes is narrowed, and the enrichment concentrates on a specific lexical item within the utterance. (Huang,2007:191). Take a look at the following examples from Huang(2007:191):

8) a. John has a brain.

b. John has a [scientific] brain

In this case, (8a) is a truism or says something obvious. Every person in the world has a brain. On this basis, we can accept explanations like those shown in brackets in (8b). Second, there are types where the description needs to be supplemented with a concept from the context. Consider (9):

9) a. Everyone wore a new wool cardigan.

b. Everyone [at Mary's party] wore a new cardigan.

Again, a process of specifying or narrowing is involved here. In the instance of (9), the quantifier everyone's domain needs to be constrained, which, depending on the context, leads to an explicature like (9b).

2.2.1.5 Ad hoc (online) Concept Construction

The study done by Barsalou(1983) served as the inspiration for Carston's expansion on the concept of ad hoc concepts, which she used in the development of Relevance Theory. According to Huang (2007:192), it is "the pragmatic adjustment of a lexical concept in the linguistically decoded logical form.". The adjustment can be characterised as either narrowing, strengthening, or both. Think about (10) for concept narrowing (Wilson and Sperber, 2012:106) and (11) for concept broadening. (Wilson, 2003: 286).

10) I have a *temperature*.

11) That book *puts me to sleep*.

A sentence like (10), according to Muller (2016:42), would be irrelevant if it were taken literally. Every living thing does have a preferred temperature. the *temperature* in this context refers to one above average. Because it relates only to a particular component of the category *temperature*, the concept is regarded as being narrowed. *However, putting to sleep in (11)* should not be interpreted as a typical (i.e., limited) sleep concept. The boundaries of *sleeping* are loosened in this situation, allowing for incorporating similar ideas like "boring."

2.3 Implicature   We are now essentially entering the domain of implicature as we turn to the implicit side of verbal communication. Differentiating between explicit and implied meaning forms the basis of the relevance-theoretic idea of implicature. Relevance theory and Grice approach the topic of explicit and implicit communication in slightly different ways. This opens the question of how linguistic form can influence pragmatic inference. Relevance Theory lets pragmatic inference play a role in its identification, and it does not equate explicitly transmitted information with conventionally encoded information. Another way it differs from the Gricean distinction is that it raises questions about how truth conditions should be used in a cognitive theory of communication (Blakemore,2002:73-74).

Because Grice initially characterised implicature primarily as something else (that is, what is communicated rather than "what is said"), there has been much debate regarding what makes a good example of an implicature. According to Michael (2002:129), relevant theorists frequently use a separate concept to define implicature (that is, as a communicated assumption that is not an explicature). However, they grounded it on the contrast between implicit and explicit meaning rather than connecting it to the lay concept of implying, as Grice did. According to Wilson and Sperber (1986: 383, cited in Yus,1997:316), the definition of implicatures is "those contextual assumptions and implications which the hearer has to recover to satisfy himself that the speaker has observed the principle of relevance." In addition, Sperber and Wilson (1995:182) note that any assumption communicated in a way that is not explicitly is still considered to be communicated; this type of communication is known as an implicature. In line with Sperber and Wilson's definition,

Carston (2000: 10) describes implicature as "any other propositional form communicated by an utterance; its content consists of wholly pragmatically inferred matter." Consider the following conversation, which can be found in (Blakemore,1992:58):

12)A: Did you enjoy your holiday?

   B: The beaches were crowded, and the hotel was full of bugs.

   To be relevant, A must believe B's reaction is affected by insects (rather than hidden microphones) and a large crowd. This leads us to think that the speaker did not have a good time during his trip. Because of its distinct propositional structure, which acts as the argument's conclusion apart from the explicated information, this information is an implicature.

   Both implicated premises and implicated conclusions fall under the category of implicatures in relevance theory. The implicated conclusions may correspond to the intended contextual implications, whereas the implicated premises may correspond to the intended contextual assumptions (Wilson and Sperber,2004: 615). As an example, let's look at the exchange (13) in (Yus,2009:764)

13)Tom: So . . Did you buy that table I told you about?

   Ann: It's too wide and uneven.

   Tom must use inference to transform Ann's utterance's schematic logical form into an appropriate interpretation if he wants to understand her correctly. The contextualised propositional form of the speech given as an explicature will be determined by some inference. Tom must do reference assignment ("it" relates to "the table"), disambiguation ("a table can be "uneven" in numerous ways," including having an uneven surface or having legs that are not correctly levelled," and free enrichment ("e.g., too wide [for what]") in this

specific situation. The following statement from proposition (13) might be the result:

(14) Explicature: The table you told me about is too wide to go through the bedroom door, and its surface is uneven.

Tom additionally has to integrate (14) with contextual information (implicated premises) because this isn't the correct response to his query (implicated conclusion). In this information, Tom will consult encyclopedic contextual data to determine how implausible it is for someone to purchase a table whose surface is uneven and does not fit through the door. Tom can arrive at the desired interpretation using this contextual information.

15) Implicature: I didn't buy the table you told me about (implicated conclusion).

3. Political Interview

An interview is a meeting between reporters and well-known or contentious guests. Both parties typically prepare for the discussion beforehand. The disputing parties face off. The reporter has to find out more about the guest. On the other side, the guest must reply. (Adams and Hicks, 2009:2). According to Montgomery (1947:147, cited in Hakim, 2017:53), there are two fundamental types of interviews: *news* and *feature interviews.* Included in News Interviews are *the expert interview, the affiliated interview, the political interview,* and *the experiential interview.*

Political interviews are those conducted with politicians to give the audience a sense of their opinions, policy stances, and, obviously, media presence (Locher and Watts, 2008: 85). political interviews, according to Sandova (2010:41), are a unique subgenre of political discourse in which politicians utilise standardised techniques to accomplish the specific communicative goal of influencing and convincing the audience. It has been stated that a political interview is also

a dialogical genre in which actors from different institutions share their thoughts on a specific topic. At the same time, their conversation is mediated by media specialists (Lauerbach and Fetzer, 2007). Political interviews rely heavily on the question-asking process. It allows interviewers to accomplish various linguistic goals, such as obtaining novel information, having interviewees approve of what they reformulate, making indirect requests, or wrapping up contentious topics in political interviews (Fetzer, 2000: 418-420).

4. Research Method

A qualitative technique was chosen since it is thought to be the most appropriate manner to conduct the interview analysis. The relevant theory developed by Sperber and Wilson is also employed to analyse the interview data. The interview with Donald Trump is the data set for this study. Jonathan Swan is the interviewer. Donald Trump is the interviewee. Jonathan conducts the interview on the Home Box Office (HBO), an American television paid network owned by Warner Media Studios on the AXIOS program. Jonathan speaks with the president about different topics, including Corona Virus, political issues, racism, and election. This interview was held on August,3,2020, in the white house.

To assess the research data, the researchers will first view the videos and then evaluate and understand what was said in the video. To perform an analysis of the data, the researchers make use of Sperber and Wilson's Relevance theoretic procedural subtasks. As already mentioned, Wilson and Sperber (2004:615) assert that there are three sub-tasks that listeners must take to comprehend what the speaker meant to convey. First, by use of decoding, disambiguation, reference resolution, and other pragmatic enrichment procedures, construct an appropriate hypothesis about

explicit content (EXPLICATURES). The second step is to build a reasonable inference regarding the intended contextual assumptions (IMPLICATED PREMISES). Third, developing a reasonable hypothesis regarding the intended contextual implications (IMPLICATED CONCLUSIONS).

5. The Analysis

The primary objective of this section is to analyse an interview with American President Donald Trump. Some interview excerpts were deliberately picked to simplify the analysis's description; the interview's transcription was grabbed from the channel website. Since the researchers have performed all the studies up to this point, not everyone may agree with the implications that have been theorised and deduced. As Sperber and Wilson (1986:142) wrote, "relevance is relevance to an individual." According to Yus (2002:1307), the paradigm heavily depends on the hearer's ability to access preexisting concepts and presumptions, which create a background against which incoming information is processed. Furnish (2015:31) also says that just as beauty is in the eye of the beholder, truth is in the ear of the hearer.

The interview occurs during certain events in America. The worldwide spread of the Coronavirus was the first major event. Sars-CoV-2 is a novel virus that causes an infectious sickness. At the end of 2019, on December 31, the first case was reported from the Wuhan area of China. Second, a black guy was killed by a white police officer cruelly. As a result, BLM (Black Lives Matter) protests the killings of several black individuals at the hands of violent police officers and issues that offend based on race or skin colour. Third, there was the 2020 US Presidential Election. The candidates are Joe Biden and Donald Trump. So Joe Bidden was declared the winner of the 2020 presidential race.

Extract 1

Jonathan Swan: The criticism of you that is most prominent, is about the communication. It's the public health experts saying that it needs to be based in reality. And they're saying that the wishful thinking and the salesmanship is just not suitable in a time when the pandemic has killed 145,000 Americans. And I understand what you're saying, that people need to hear positive thinking, but for the past five months it's been, the Virus is totally under control, and the cases have been going up and the deaths have been going up.

Donald J. Trump: ………. This was sent to us by China, one way or the other, and we're never going to forget it. Believe me, we're never going to forget it. And we were beating China at every single point. We were beating them on trade, we were making progress like nobody's ever made progress. Before the pandemic, they had the worst year, Jonathan, that they've had in 67 years. You know that. With the tariffs and everything else I did, we would taking in billions of dollars. I was giving some of it to the farmers. The farmers were doing well because they were targeting the farmers, I was targeting China. We were doing good.Then all of a sudden, the game changed, and I had to close it down. I closed down the greatest economy ever in history.

The topic of discussion is Donald Trump's use of the idea of positive thinking in his handling of the Corona Virus situation. Trump believes that all problems, including the Corona Virus, can be solved by maintaining an optimistic outlook.

Jonathan asked Trump in a roundabout way whether optimism and salesmanship are appropriate responses to a pandemic like the Corona Virus, which has killed many Americans, and the death rate is continuing to grow. Trump appears to provide an answer unrelated to Jonathan's inquiry by offering a significant number of justifications. For example, he discusses the history of the flu dating back to 1971 and how it affected other countries such as Moscow, Brazil, and Spain, amongst others. Because of the overwhelming amount of information he provides, there is a loss of ostension in both the communication and the hearer. In the portion of his response underlined here, the president makes his point clear to the audience by emphasizing the word "China" numerous times. The audience must begin to digest the communicative hints by looking for relevant knowledge in their encyclopedias to get relevant to the communicative intention he is trying to convey. If there is a response like this, the speaker and the hearer need to have some cognitive environment in mutual with one another, or else there will be some confusion among the listeners. As a result of Donald Trump's reaction, which establishes a sequence of manifest contextual information and assumptions, a mutually cognitive environment is built between the speaker and the hearers. The recipient of Trump's message must draw correct conclusions and understand his communicative intention. The listener can arrive at the optimal level of relevance by going through a series of explicature enrichment processes such as *reference resolution* (where "this" refers to the Virus, "us" refers to America, "we" refers to Americans, "it" refers to the act of sending the Virus, "they" refers to the Chinese, and "I" refers to Donald Trump.) and *saturation* (they had the worst year[of what],

we would taking in[where] billions of dollars.). Therefore, the inferentially enriched language decoding has the potential to produce the explicature in (15):

15) *The Virus* was sent to *America* by China, one way or another, and *Americans* will never forget the *sending* and the *Americans were* crushing China at every turn. *Americans* were crushing them in trade, and *Americans* were making progress as no one had ever made progress before. Before the pandemic, China had its worst *economic* year. That the *Chinese* have had in 67 years, Jonathan. You are aware of this. Due to Trump's tariffs and other actions, *Americans* would bring billions of dollars into *the country*. *The Americans* were doing well. Then, suddenly, the game changed, and *Trump* was forced to shut down *the economy*. *Trump* effectively shut down the greatest *economy* in history.

In this manner, a larger amount of effort is expended during the cognitive process; however, the audience anticipates being rewarded with a greater number of cognitive effects in order to ascertain the implicit intention. Due to the fact that the semantic representation is now complete, an audience may now deduce the following contextual assumptions (implicated premises):

16) a. The United States of America and China are two of the world's most economically and commercially competitive countries.

b. For many years, political and economic tension has existed between China and the United States.

c. The Corona Virus was first discovered in China.

d.Due to the virus, America shut its borders with Europe.

The audience should share the mentioned assumptions in (16) to arrive at the intended meaning of Trump's response; consequently, the implicated conclusion is deducible from the explicature in (15) and the contextual assumptions in (16a-d), which results in the implicated conclusion in (17):

17) China purposefully delivered the Virus to the United States to halt that country's economic growth.

Extract 2

Jonathan Swan: Well, look at South Korea, for example. 51 million population, 300 deaths. It's like, it's crazy compared to-

Donald J. Trump: You don't know that.

Jonathan Swan: I do.

Donald J. Trump: You don't know that.

Jonathan Swan: You think they're faking their statistics, South Korea? An advanced country?

Donald J. Trump: I won't get into that because I have a very good relationship with the country.

When questioned about the prevalence of the coronavirus in other nations, such as South Korea, where the death rate is lower than that of the United States when population density is considered, Trump uses the phrase "you don't know" to attempt to communicate his informational and communicative intentions subtly. When Jonathan questioned the president about the uncertainty surrounding the statistics that South Korea released, the president's response seemed unrelated to the reporter's inquiry, but the reporter believes that Trump's statements must be pertinent and worth the time and effort it takes to understand

them. Behind his words, there is another implied message. The hearer requires more sophisticated pragmatic processes than simple decoding. The meaning of the utterance needs to be finished by the pragmatic procedures of *reference resolution* ('I' refers to Trump), *free enrichment* (I won't get into [what]), and *saturation* ("I have a very good relationship with the country"[which on]). The listener is led to the linguistic meaning through the use of the aforementioned explicature enrichment procedures as in (18):

18) Trump won't get into an argument because Trump has a very good relationship with South Korea.

Aside from the explanation provided in (18), the audience will typically attempt to make some contextual assumptions about the speaker. This is because the relevance of (18) rests in determining why the respondent wishes to avoid directly addressing the question. This necessitates the derivation of a contextual assumption on the part of the addressee, which is as follows:

19) a. When one country enjoys a positive relationship with another, both countries tend to ignore each other's flaws.

b. The United States of America maintains strong ties with South Korea, in contrast to its relationships with North Korea, China, and Iran.

If the propositional form in (18) is evaluated in a context that includes the implicated premises in (19), then it will yield the contextual implication in (20):

20) Trump contends that South Korea's numbers on the coronavirus are fake and that they are not reliable.

Extract 3 Jonathan Swan: You had a phone call with Vladimir Putin on July 23. Did you bring up this issue?

Donald J. Trump: No. That was a phone call to discuss other things. And frankly, that's an issue that many people said was fake news.

Jonathan Swan): Who said it was fake news?

Donald J. Trump: I think a lot of people. If you look at some of the wonderful folks from the Bush Administration, some of them, not any friends of mine, were saying that it's a fake issue. But a lot of people said, it's a fake issue.

Jonathan shifted the focus of the conversation away from health and toward politics. He asked about the revelation that Russia paid bounties to Taliban fighters to kill American soldiers and that President Trump had a phone call with Vladimir Putin in July. Jonathan has inquired about receiving a response from President Trump. He is interested in learning whether or not he brought up this matter during their phone conversation. After then, President Trump responded to the question mysteriously by acting ostentatiously and using the phrase "It was fake news." For the reader or listener to comprehend the propositional form of his statement, which is underlined, they need to provide some additional context to understand what Trump is attempting to communicate. The addressee is expected to develop the logical form inferentially by going through processes such as reference assignment ('I' refers to Trump, 'you' refers to Jonathan, 'Bush administration' refers to America's ex-cabinet, 'them' refers to Bush's cabinet members, 'it' refers to the news). Via disambiguation, the meaning of "folk" must be disambiguated, meaning either "people in general" or "culture of a community or nation." The most obvious interpretation that can be drawn from this phrase is "people in general." After these pragmatist steps have been completed, the hearer will create an acceptable hypothesis regarding the meaning of the utterance, as follows:

21) *Trump* believes a lot of people. If Jonathan looks at some of the fantastic *people* from the Bush Administration, some of *its staff*—not any allies of *Trump*—were claiming that *the news* was a fabrication. However, several people asserted that *the news* was false.

However, the interviewer's question is not instantly answered by the propositional form in (21) due to the fact that Trump discusses the opinions of others rather than his own regarding the news. However, it should be understood as an attempt that complies with the relevance principle and requires further processing on the addressee's side. Despite this, it paves the way for many interpretations incompatible with the straightforward response to the statement. For this response to have real relevance, the hearer must give the following contextual assumptions for (21):

22) a. Donald Trump and George W. Bush are both members of the same political party, the Republican party.

b. Bush disagrees with Trump's policy, even though they belong to the same party.

c. When an adversary testifies favourably for you, it demonstrates that you are doing what is proper in your actions.

In the process of deriving contextual implications, often referred to as implied conclusions, the explicature, along with the contextual assumptions that have mutually manifested, can also be used. For example, (23):

23) Trump is confident that reports of an agreement between Russia and the Taliban are entirely fabricated.

Neo- and Post-Griceans have given much thought to the topic of scalar implicatures. Scalar implicatures, according to relevance theorists, are based on context. They contend that these implicatures are not dependent on the emergence of any Quantity maxim but rather on a concept of relevance that considers the context of speech. Because of this, even though the speaker uses the word "some" from the scale discussed earlier, it is important to consider the context to understand that they are saying "not all." Consider how Trump's statement uses the scale phrase "some" in (''....*some* of them, not any friends of mine, were saying that it's a fake issue. But a *lot of people* said, it's a fake issue.''). Trump's use of "some" suggests "not all" when the context is considered. Then his response, together with the underlying assumption that it would be the most appropriate remark in light of her preferences and talents, will imply that he is unwilling to be more specific, that is, that he doesn't want to specify which member of Bush's staff reports the news. What matters, in this case, is that, following Mazzarella (2015:165–166), an utterance including the scalar expression "some'' does not always generate a scalar implicature of the type "not all.

Extract 4

> **Jonathan Swan:** Yeah, I understand, but let me finish. There were Americans out in the streets asking for change. Mr. President, have you ever met with a Black Lives Matter activist to hear them out, hear their arguments?
>
> **Donald J. Trump:** Well, Black Lives Matter started off to me very badly because it was-
>
> **Jonathan Swan:** Did you ever meet with one?

> **Donald J. Trump:** ….pigs in a blanket, burn them like bacon. That was the first time I ever of Black… That was three, four years ago. Pigs meaning policemen. Pigs is what they're referring to, in a blanket, fry them like bacon. So I got off to a bad start. I got off to a very bad start.

Jonathan brought up the subject of racism in America at another point in their interview. Jonathan inquired of Trump regarding the protests that took place on the street on May 25 in response to Floyd's passing. The incident occurred after Floyd had been detained and was begging Chauvin, the police officer, that he couldn't breathe. Chauvin, however, continued to keep his knee on Floyd's neck long after he had stopped moving and speaking. Floyd was unable to breathe. Jonathan presses Trump on his desire to have a face-to-face conversation with members of the Black Lives Matter movement. Black Lives Matter is a social movement that originated in the United States in 2013 and has since spread to other countries worldwide. Its primary objective is to combat racism and anti-Black violence, mainly that which takes the form of police brutality.

In response to Jonathan's inquiry, Donald Trump echoes the metaphorical statement "Pigs in a Blanket, Fry 'Em Like Bacon" uttered by the protesters. This serves to indicate to the audience his goal to communicate. This results in the addressee having to expend greater effort to comprehend his statement and understand the motivation behind his words. The receiver needs to make an effort because, first and foremost, the receiver needs to recognise the cultural reference and associate it with the expression "pig in a blanket." It is a chipolata sausage with bacon wrapping'. According to the reference assignment, "pig"

refers to a police officer, "burn" refers to the act of killing that officer, "them" refers to the policemen, and "bacon" refers to the deceased officer's body. These contextualization procedures have resulted in the statement that the speaker made, and it is possible to explain this proposition using an explicature such as in (24):

24) ... wrap the police officers in a blanket and set them on fire like you would bacon.

For the reader or listener to understand the intention behind Trump's repetition of the metaphorical slogan by the demonstrators, they are required to investigate the following contextual premises:

25)   a. On the street, police officers serve as government representatives.

b. Making fun of the cops in the street is the same as making fun of the government.

c. Protesters made fun of the cops and referred to them as pigs in their blankets.

d. Protesters poked fun at Trump by equating law enforcement officers to animals.

In addition, the explicature presented in (24), in connection with the mutually manifested contextual assumptions described in (25), can be utilised in the process of extracting contextual implications, generally known as implied conclusions, such as (26):

26) As a result of the mockery, Trump is not yet prepared to meet with Black Lives Matter activists.

In another section of his statement, Jonathan addresses why they have not yet met up with each other. Trump provides many explanations, the majority of which are irrelevant, as will be shown in the following part:

Jonathan Swan: Why haven't you?

Donald J. Trump:… the sign. Nobody's asked for a meeting, right? I've never been, nobody's ever asked me for a meeting. Let me tell you with African Americans, I'm doing very well. They had the best employment numbers they've ever had. They had the best job numbers they've ever had. They were making more money than they ever made. <u>We were all set until we got hit by China with the Virus. Jonathan, there was actually, we were becoming a very unified country.</u>

In the portion of his underlined response, Trump fails to give adequate evidence for the listener to arrive at the intended meaning with minimal effort spent processing the information. According to the example's context, it takes a while for the addressee to confirm the information the president wants to send. The addressee must draw certain conclusions based on his information. To get the desired explicature, some sentence components must be enhanced by inference. The hearer uses their prior knowledge to fill in the gaps in the explicature's meaning through reference assignment, saturation, and disambiguation. Through reference assignment ('we' refers to Americans), saturation ('..hit by China with the Virus' [which one],... we were becoming a very unified country[in which aspect]), and disambiguation ('set' refers to a group of people associated by shared interests). The linguistic meaning might be represented as follows:

27) <u>Americans</u> were all *one people* until China infected us with *the Coronavirus*. There was a time when America was becoming a much more

unified country *in terms of togetherness.*

It seems as though the response given by the president to the journalist's question concerning the reason behind not meeting with Black Lives Matter demonstrators is irrelevant to the context in which the question was asked. The contextual influence that we get from the answer, on the other hand, makes it easy to evaluate how relevant the answer is. For the respondent to be able to understand the response as consistent and logical, they will need to supply the contextual premises listed below:

28) a. The coronavirus was discovered for the very first time in China.

b. If the virus is initially discovered in China, then China will be held responsible for its spread to other countries.

c. Trump refers to the infection as the "Chinese virus."

d. China is a competitor to the United States, both politically and commercially.

e. Multiculturalism and racial diversity are vital in the United States. Trump's government brought about a lovely existence in terms of coexistence before the Virus.

If the addressee can offer the contextual premise in (28), as well as the explicature in (29), they will easily be able to draw the contextual implication (contextual conclusion) in (29):

29) Donald Trump implies that the United States' instability and resulting economic and social unity decline are China's fault.

6. Conclusions

This work intends to use Relevance-Theoretic comprehension procedures to examine Donald Trump's interview with HBO. After conducting their study, the researchers have concluded:

1. Relevance Theoretical comprehension procedures like explicature (via reference assignment, disambiguation, saturation, free enrichment, and ad hoc ideas), implicated premises, and implicated conclusions are effective ways to arrive at the intended meaning the speaker intended to convey.

2. Encoding and decoding messages are not the only means by which communication can take place.; rather, communication is accomplished by providing contextual clues from which an inference can be drawn on the communicator's intended meaning. The presence of a context and the execution of inferential reasoning are prerequisites for interpreting a message, neither of which can be reduced to a code alone.

3. Donald Trump, on the other hand, is known for being very plain and frank in his statements, even though politicians typically favour using indirect and implicit language. The problem with Donald Trump is that he delivers overwhelming information; the vast majority is irrelevant, leading to a loss of ostension in communication. The addressee has to exert a lot of effort to recover the intended meaning that the speaker had in mind for his message. In addition, when a speaker's utterance lacks ostension, it creates a cognitive environment distinct from the environment experienced by the listener

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51- Appendix: Transcript of Donald Trump's Interview
https://www.rev.com/blog/transcripts/donald-trump-interview-transcript-with-axios-on-hbo