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THE ROLE OF ENCYCLOPEDIAIC KNOWLEDGE AND CONTEXT IN CREATING MEANING

This paper, set in the cognitive linguistic framework presents and discusses the role of encyclopedic knowledge and context in inferring meaning, setting the issue in the context of the previous relevant research related to cognitive linguistics, cognitive pragmatics and the socio-cognitive approach, all of which are usage-based. Everyday communication is largely implicit and is often based on non-literal, indirect or vague linguistic expressions and requires an active involvement of both speakers and hearers in order to construe the intended meaning. We differentiate between direct and indirect communication, and recognize three subtypes of indirect communication: non-literal, illocutionary and vague. Also, we define three main components of encyclopedic knowledge: experiential, pragmatic and cultural. Overall, the privilege goes to pragmatics, which encompasses semantics as well.

Key words: encyclopedic knowledge, context, direct communication, indirect communication.

Овај рад, у когнитивнолингвистичком оквиру, представља и разматра улогу енциклопедијског знања и контекста у процесу извођења значења, а ову проблематику смешта у оквир претходних релевантних истраживања у вези са когнитивном лингвистиком, когнитивном прагматиком и социо-когнитивним приступом. Језик у свакодневној употреби често је имплицитан, заснован на недословним, индиректним или нејасним изразима, те захтева активно учешће и говорника и слушаоца како би се намеравано значење конструисало. Разликујемо директну и индиректну комуникацију, а потоња се манифестује кроз три подтипа: недословну, илокуциону и нејасну. Такође, дефинишемо три главне компоненте енциклопедијског значења: искуствену, прагматичку и културолошку. Примат припада прагматици, која обухвата и семантику.

Кључне речи: енциклопедијско значење, контекст, директна комуникација, индиректна комуникација.

1. INTRODUCTION.¹ This paper, set in the cognitive linguistic framework, i.e., approach to language and communication, analyzes and presents the role of encyclopedic knowledge and situational context in interpreting meaning. The study is set in the specified theoretical framework since cognitive semantics is “indeed a maximalist, maximally contextualized framework”, as claimed by Gearererts (2010: 235), integrating pragmatics and semantics, and favoring a usage-based approach to meaning, which is encyclopedic, rather than dictionary. This view has both thematic and methodological consequences (GEEARERTS 2010). Since the development of this branch of linguistics is becoming more usage-oriented, the most recent trend in cognitive linguistics, thematically, is to investigate meaning

¹ Some of the ideas and explanations in this paper were presented in the book *Pojmovna metafora i metonimija u teoriji i praksi* (FILIPović KOVAČEVIĆ 2021) written in Serbian (eng. *Conceptual Metaphor and Metonymy in Theory and Practice*; <https://digitalna.ff.uns.ac.rs/sa-drzaj/2021/978-86-6065-649-2>)

phenomena in different types of discourse, for example, in literature, politics, science, advertising, and other genres, but also in spontaneous, everyday speech, which is most prominent in metaphor research (SEMINO 2008 provides an overview of these types of research). Methodologically (GEEARERTS 2010), this means a shift in research towards forming experimental settings and creating corpora in the form of spontaneous, non-elicited language data, which is again most prominent in metaphor research, an important example being a particular procedure for identifying metaphors, the Metaphor Identification Procedure (or MIP), developed by the Pragglejaz group.²

Bearing in mind the usage-based approach, we will provide several expressions from everyday spontaneous language, to start developing the topic of interest. Everyday communication is largely implicit, or, as Boux, et al. (2023: 40) say, in day-to-day communication, people often communicate in an indirect manner, such as the response “I am vegetarian” to the question “Would you like to have dinner at a steakhouse?” implicating “no”, which is straightforwardly understood. We will provide a few more examples supporting the claim that everyday communication is largely implicit, and further specify that it is often based on non-literal, indirect or vague linguistic expressions, which can be more or less conventional. For example, we commonly utter and hear metaphorical expressions like *Time flies* ‘Time passes fast’, *He is in a black mood* ‘He is sad’, *He’s fuming* ‘He is angry’, *This is a big issue* ‘This is an important issue’, or metonymic expressions like *She shampoos her hair twice a week* ‘She uses shampoo to wash her hair twice a week’, *She likes Monet the most* ‘She likes the pictures painted by Monet the most’, *I drank a cup of coffee* ‘I drank coffee from one cup’, *The company decided to open another branch office* ‘The director of the company decided to open another branch office’. Also, there are a lot of vague and ambiguous expressions: *See you soon! Meet you there! See you here!* Such expressions require context to determine reference points. Some expressions are ambiguous, like *I went to the bank this morning*, which might refer to the financial institution or the edge of a river. Furthermore, people often mean more than they say by resorting to indirect speech acts, like *It’s stuffy in here*, which can be a request to open the window, or *There is a little problem with this*, which can express disapproval meaning: ‘This is bad’. Apart from being implicit, as Cheng and O’Keeffe (2015) and Carter and McCarthy (2006) note, everyday discourse naturally contains vague language, which is often seen as similar to uncertainty (STUBBS 1996), and is part of analyzing hedging, generality, ambiguity, ambivalence, and fuzziness (CHAFE 1982; FRANKEN 1997; HE 2000; ZHANG 1998).

Overall, from a pragmatic stance, indirect speech acts are described as instances of language use where a speaker who “utters a sentence, means what he says, but also means something more” (SEARLE 1975). Put differently, indirect speech acts allow the speaker to perform one speech act and in addition perform another one. According to Searle (1975), the listener then infers the intended additional meaning relying on general world knowledge, simultaneously assuming

² Pragglejaz (2007); Pragglejaz is an acronym for an international group of prominent metaphor researchers, including Peter Crisp, Raymond Gibbs, Alice Deignan, Graham Low, Gerard Steen, Lynne Cameron, Elena Semino, Joe Grady, Alan Cienki, and Zoltan Kövecses.

cooperativeness of the speaker as well as the fact that his/her contributions are relevant. Further on, Grice (1975) proposes a framework based on the cooperative principle in communication, to explain implicit communication: “Make [their] contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which [they] are engaged” (GRICE 1975).

From a cognitive linguistic perspective, a lot of linguistic communication is based on what Radden et al. (2007) identify as instances of semantic underspecification, which calls for specific inferencing processes in order to construe meaning. The aim of this paper is to present, discuss and exemplify the role of encyclopedic knowledge and situational context in construing meaning, setting the issue in the previous relevant research in cognitive linguistics, cognitive pragmatics and the socio-cognitive approach. Also the paper aims to further delineate particular subtypes of communication and encyclopedic knowledge relying on the mentioned relevant approaches.

Considering the topic of this paper, it is important to mention the subfield of cognitive pragmatics, which deals with the reciprocal relationship between pragmatics and cognition and as such focuses on the cognitive aspects of the construal of meaning-in-context, both in language production and comprehension, and which strives to specify the cognitive abilities and processes required to arrive at “what can or must be said” in order to get across “what is meant”, from the speaker’s perspective, and to arrive at “what is meant” on the basis of “what is said”, from the hearer’s perspective (SCHMID 2012: 3). Schmid (2012: 3) believes that the existing usage-oriented linguistic approaches have not provided a suitable usage-based explanation of communication. Traditional pragmatics has not provided solid empirical evidence, psycholinguistics relies on evidence, but has not provided a bigger picture of the cognitive processes in the construal of meaning in context, and cognitive linguistics, with its focus on stored knowledge, has not described how stored knowledge and online processing interact in construing linguistically underdetermined, non-explicit and non-literal meanings-in-context. Consequently, Schmid (2012: 6–10) insists that a cognitive-pragmatic theory should compensate for the shortcomings so far by accounting for the following in meaning construction: (1) cognitive prerequisites, such as motor and sensory ability to produce and perceive utterances, linguistic competence, willingness to engage in communication, cooperation, social competence, cultural knowledge, and world knowledge, and (2) cognitive abilities, such as keeping track of situational context and linguistic context, of the mental states of other interlocutors, connecting linguistic and situational input, constructing conventionally and contextually implicit and non-literal meaning.

2. THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS. Cognitive linguistics holds the view that language is embedded in man’s overall cognitive capacities and interprets language in terms of concepts, universal or language-specific. The basic idea of the approach is that meaning, as the most important linguistic component, is in our mind, i.e., it is stored in our conceptual system. Furthermore, the structure of our conceptual system is reflected in the patterns of language, whereby a large part of man’s conceptual organization is based on cognitive mechanisms, such as metaphor and metonymy (KÖVECSES – RADDEN 1998; LAKOFF – JOHNSON 1980/2003; LITTLEMORE 2015),

semantic frames (FILLMORE 1982), mental spaces and conceptual blends (FAUCONNIER 1994; 1997; FAUCONNIER – TURNER 2002), the focus on the very cognitive structure depending on the particular theory in the cognitive linguistic approach. Briefly, words do not represent neatly packaged bundles of meaning, but serve as points of access to vast repositories of knowledge relating to a concept, as meaning has to be constructed, i.e., hearers have to engage actively in order to select an appropriate interpretation against the context of the utterance. Metaphor, metonymy, semantic frames, mental and blended spaces are seen as conceptual mechanisms, as ways of thinking about and acting in the world. (On cognitive linguistics in general see, e.g.: CROFT – CRUSE 2004; EVANS – GREEN 2006; KÓVÉCSÉS 2010; 2020; LAKOFF – JOHNSON 1980/2003; LEE 2001; UNGERER – SCHMID 2006). Thus, we might comment in short that cognitive linguistics is a holistic approach to language, which explains linguistic phenomena and structures taking into consideration: 1. cognitive structures in the mind, 2. man's interaction with the world, on the basis of which he/she acquires extra-linguistic knowledge and experience, socio-physical and cultural, and 3. the situational context in which language is used. Geeraerts (GEERAERTS 2010; 2015; 2024) underlines that Cognitive Linguistics is not a unified linguistic theory developed by a single Big Name (GEERAERTS 2024: 160), but a collective enterprise held together by viewing context as a crucial factor, which makes cognitive linguistics a recontextualizing framework par excellence (GEERAERTS 2024: 160). Geeraerts (2024: 160) also singles out fundamental recontextualizing characteristics of cognitive linguistics, experiential grounding of meaning and the interaction of senses and the context of use, as well as the interaction between the grammatical system and usage. Furthermore, cognitive linguistics reintroduces the social dimension as an inherent dimension of language. The importance of context is also underlined by its very broad definition provided by Boux et al. (2023: 41) when investigating the cognitive aspects of indirect speech acts. Namely, context includes immediate physical context, linguistic context and background knowledge or common ground.

Overall, briefly put, cognitive linguistics resides on particular views, which will be presented here briefly in the form of ten crucial postulates:

- 1) Conceptual structure is embodied (embodied cognition thesis)
- 2) Semantic structure is conceptual structure
- 3) Meaning representation/knowledge is encyclopedic
- 4) Meaning is construed and meaning construction is conceptualization (These 4 postulates are singled out and explained in Evans and Green (2006))
- 5) Semantics and pragmatics are inseparable
- 6) Meaning is the most important in language
- 7) Meaning is non-compositional
- 8) Meaning structure depends on the perspective
- 9) Meaning is motivated
- 10) Polysemy is the norm

This section provides a brief overview of the listed postulates, whereas the rest of the paper sheds light on the significance of the postulates relating to encyclopedic knowledge/ meaning and context in meaning interpretation.

- 1) The postulate: *conceptual structure is embodied* means that conceptual structure is based on the interaction with the physical world, i.e., on our bodily

experience. It is tangible, experientially available, i.e., comes from man's sensory and/or bodily experience in the outer world, which is labelled as experiential realism, embodied realism, experientialism, the embodied cognition thesis (JOHNSON 1987). For example, psychological states are typically thought of and expressed as containers (STATES ARE CONTAINERS), on the basis of our experience with the feelings we get inside and outside a place or a container: *He's in love; We're out of trouble; He fell into depression.*

- 2) The postulate: *semantic structure is conceptual structure* relates to the view that language refers to concepts in the mind rather than to objects in the external world.
- 3) The postulate: *meaning representation is encyclopedic* claims that there is no separate mental lexicon with exclusively linguistic knowledge. Rather, words are just signals or indicators for activating vast encyclopedic knowledge responsible for inferring the intended meaning. Thus, particular encyclopedic knowledge is utilized automatically and unconsciously in interpreting the expression *Your friend is a snake* as 'Your friend is toxic and does not have really good intentions', or the expression *This bank clerk is a clown* as 'This bank clerk is very unreliable, not serious since he makes jokes while working' or as 'This bank clerk is dressed inappropriately.' This postulate will be explained further and in detail in the following sections of the paper.
- 4) The postulate: *meaning is construed; meaning construction is conceptualization* means that getting the intended meaning is a dynamic process. More precisely, inferencing is based on encyclopedic knowledge, which contains structured concepts with experiential, pragmatic and cultural aspects, but context, as well. Cognitive linguists highlight the importance of the context, i.e., contextual/situated meaning.
- 5) The postulate: *semantics and pragmatics are inseparable* stems from the premise that there is no difference between competence and performance and that there is no crucial difference between the basic, semantic meaning, on the one hand, and pragmatic or cultural meaning, on the other hand. Actually, meaning about language is drawn from using language, i.e., meaning of language is meaning about how to use language, according to Tomasello (2003: 5), as stated in his usage-based thesis "linguistic structure comes out of language use". In linguistics there has always been debate about whether language is a relatively independent cognitive faculty or an essential part of overall cognitive development. Recent research has strongly pointed in the direction of the mentioned association between core meaning and performance, the only issue remaining the extent to which grammar-research and usage-research can be combined (KECSKES 2012). Kecskes (2012) defines language as "a system of signs operated by a conceptual base that is the reflection of the socio-cultural background in which the system of signs is put to use", and thus indirectly tries to define a three-step link, i.e., he focuses on the relationship between the sociocultural dimension and the system of signs through the conceptual base. Further on, Kecskes (2024) investigates how the three factors interact: the system of signs, sociocultural background, and the conceptual base. As part of this, he particularly focuses on sociocultural

background and encyclopedic experience, which will be addressed in greater detail somewhat later in the paper.

Desagulier and Monneret (2023) devoted an important article to considering various cognitively-oriented views proposing the blurry line between semantics and pragmatics, which led them to conclude that that this non-separation is both a hallmark and a point of criticism. Namely, criticism relates to the fact that integrating semantics and pragmatics can undermine the study of pragmatics. Further on, they placed particular focus on the most recent approaches to semantics and pragmatics from a usage-based perspective emerging in the early 2010s, as proposed, for example, by Gibbs (2017), Kecskes and Zhang (2009), Panther (2022), Panther and Thornburg (1998, 2003) and Schmid (2012; 2020). Still, there is a lot of work to be done to integrate the pragmatic component into a fully usage-based approach to language.

- 6) The postulate: *meaning is the most important in language* relates to the fact that cognitive linguistics strives to provide a single model encompassing the explanation of both lexical and grammatical organization. Thus, semantic structure relates to all linguistic units – lexical, grammatical (e.g., bound morphemes) and sentence structure, claiming that the choice of particular lexical, grammatical words and sentence structures is semantically meaningful, i.e., gives different meanings. For example, our opting for active or passive structures is meaningful since the subject position is the figure, i.e., that which is salient, in the focus of our attention, something known we want to tell something new about, whereas the object is the ground, i.e., a point of reference (On figure/ground distinction see in Langacker (1991), sections 7 & 8). Thus, if we say *My bank approved me for a loan*, the focus is on the bank (i.e., the person got the money from the bank), while, if we say *My loan has been approved*, the focus is on the money, i.e., the person has got it now.
- 7) The postulate: *meaning is non-compositional* is in closest connection with the principle of meaning construction. Meaning essentially involves an integration of structures the result of which is not a simple sum of entry structures, but most commonly more complex, new meaning, which is especially highlighted in cognitive linguistic theories dealing with dynamic meaning construction, such as Mental Spaces Theory and Conceptual Blending Theory. For example, a *mad doctor* can be ‘a doctor who is mad’, which is a compositional meaning, or ‘a doctor for the mad’, which is a non-compositional meaning. Turner and Fauconnier (1995) claim that words with non-compositional meanings listed first in dictionaries, are common in language and that compositional meanings can be explained only by strong defaults.
- 8) The postulate: *meaning structure depends on the perspective or viewpoint* means that language does not reflect reality objectively, but via specifically selected structure it expresses meaning from a particular perspective. For example, when labelling a very thin woman, a fashion designer would say that she is *slim* or *slender*, while a doctor would use the words (and the concepts) *skinny* or *underweight*.
- 9) The postulate: *meaning is motivated* refers to polysemous words and idioms. According to this view, transferred and idiomatic, non-literal meanings are based on some of the three cognitive mechanisms: conceptual metaphors,

metonymies, and conventional knowledge (KÖVECSES 2010: 242–244). For example, the idiom *to aim for the stars* meaning ‘to set high goals or aspirations’ (*He always aims for the stars in his business projects*) is based on the combination of conceptual metaphors SUCCESS IS UP, GOOD IS UP and HAPPY IS UP.

- 10) The postulate: *polysemy is the norm* explains that words typically have more than one meaning. Brugman and Lakoff (1988) and Lakoff 1987 (later simplified by Tyler and Evans (2003)) pioneered a model of lexical meaning based on categorization, prototype and conceptual metaphor, where words are seen as complex radial cognitive categories with more meanings. One meaning is prototypical (GIORA 1997; GIORA – GUR 2003) and other, non-prototypical meanings are more or less associated with the prototypical and are derived from the prototypical via cognitive mechanisms for meaning extension: conceptual metaphor, metonymy, image-schematic transformations and/or conventional knowledge (EVANS – GREEN 2006: 332). For example, some of the meanings of the noun *press* are the following: literally it is ‘a machine for printing’, figuratively it is ‘a journalist’ (the underlying linked metonymies are INSTRUMENT FOR ACTION, ACTION FOR PEOPLE³), or ‘business that prints and publishes books’ (INSTRUMENT FOR ACTION, ACTION FOR COMPANY), or ‘newspaper’ (CAUSE FOR EFFECT OF PRODUCER FOR PRODUCT). On the other hand, some of the meanings of the adjective *high* are the following: it has literal meaning in *a ten-foot high statue*.⁴ Metaphorically it means: ‘of a large number or amount’ *Temperatures remained high for the rest of the week* (the underlying metonymy is MORE IS UP⁵), or ‘of a good standard, quality’ *Our guests expect us to maintain high standards* (GOOD IS UP), or ‘happy or excited’ *I was still high from the applause* (HAPPY IS UP).

3. DISCUSSION: WHAT IS ENCYCLOPEDIAIC KNOWLEDGE AND HOW WE USE IT. As stated in the previous section, in cognitive linguistics, meaning and particularly, conveying meaning via language use is fundamental. However, as Kecskes (2024: 269) notes, language cannot be so all-inclusive as to convey every aspect of meaning. Consequently, Gumperz (2001: 216) believes that some unstated, taken-for-granted background knowledge is important to fill in what is left unsaid (GUMPERZ 2001: 216). Kecskes (2024: 270) labels this sociocultural background knowledge, and says that it comprises sociocultural practices and experiences of members of a speech community, which they use to make sense of the world around them. Overall, due to the presently dominating usage-oriented approaches in linguistics, an important matter is to define the types of knowledge, i.e., three types of knowledge: linguistic knowledge, conceptual knowledge, and encyclopedic knowledge. Here, we will focus on Kecskes’ view since his definition of language is based on the relationship between these three knowledges. This issue is not so simple as it may seem, but generally, linguistic knowledge can be associated to the core meaning of lexical items, conceptual knowledge to possible modifications of the core meaning depending on situational contexts, and encyclopedic knowledge to the world

³ Conceptual metonymies in the paper are listed according to Kövecses and Radden (1998).

⁴ Examples for *high* are from: <https://www.ldoceonline.com/dictionary/high>

⁵ Conceptual metaphors in the paper are listed according to Lakoff, Espenson and Schwartz (1991).

knowledge associated with a word. The proposition that encyclopedic knowledge is associated with sociocultural background is not so simple (KECSKES 2024: 272). Namely, some researchers (e.g., FILLMORE 1982; CROFT – CRUSE 2004; EVANS 2006) associate encyclopedic knowledge with sociocultural background knowledge. However, in cognitive linguistics, encyclopedic knowledge is part of the lexicon, and the activation of particular meanings is guided by the context, which erases the distinction between semantics and pragmatics (e.g., FAUCONNIER 1997; EVANS 2006; PAOLUCCI 2021). There are more or less differing views on the distinction between the types of knowledge (e.g., WIERZBICKA 1996), especially the status and the scope of encyclopedic knowledge, but we will focus on Kecskes's view, as the latest and the most encompassing. Namely, Kecskes (2024) proposes that in meaning construction there is a dynamic interplay of actual situational context, as part of sociocultural background, and lexical items. There are two main types of knowledge – *linguistic knowledge* on one side and *sociocultural background knowledge* on the other. Sociocultural background knowledge is further subdivided into two components – *conceptual knowledge* and *encyclopedic knowledge*. The conceptual knowledge, i.e., prior reoccurring experience, is immediately tied to linguistic knowledge (lexical items with their semantic properties), while encyclopedic knowledge, the other type of sociocultural background knowledge, is recruited as needed in the actual language use. Crucially, the conceptual knowledge part is associated directly with linguistic knowledge, while encyclopedic knowledge is activated in the actual language use. This is in line with the socio-cognitive approach to communication and pragmatics by Kecskes (2012) and Kecskes and Zhang (2009), which claims that “communication is the result of the interplay of intention and attention motivated by socio-cultural background that is privatized individually by interlocutors” (KECSKES 2012: 180). This is a post-Gricean model of communication, which is not limited to intention, cooperation, the principle of relevance, and Gricean concepts, but involves a social dimension, which is based on the postulates of usage-based cognitive linguistics. This dynamic model of communication unites societal and private or individual aspects in that it views both speakers and hearers as constrained by societal conditions, but it views them also as individuals, who have their own goals, intentions and desires, etc., expressed in communication. Encyclopedic knowledge is associated with cultural models providing behavioural scenarios for individuals in communication.

Similarly, most recently, Desagulier and Monneret (2023), who apply cognitive linguistics and a usage-based approach to the study of semantics and pragmatics, focus on the idea, rooted in the non-separation between semantics and pragmatics, that core, dictionary meaning is stable and context-independent, while encyclopedic meaning is encompassing and includes all knowledge stemming from contextual experience. In other words, meaning is encyclopedic, and as such, it is inherently tied to sociocultural and contextual factors. The authors (2023: 5–6) take the example of the word *smartphone*, and argue that its meaning encompasses not just its technical, operational features, but also sociocultural aspects, like its association with trendiness and wealth.

Considering all the previously addressed issues, postulates and queries, we adhere to Kecskes' (2024) model of types of knowledge, and Desagulier and Monneret' views (2023) and further, elaborate on the key essential components of

encyclopediaic knowledge, which are activated individually or simultaneously when inferring the meaning of utterances, depending on the very situation and the context. However, first, it must be reiterated that the role of encyclopediaic meaning has its full potential since it upbuilds itself upon the cognitive linguistic premise that meaning is construed, i.e., inferred, which involves mostly instant unconscious mental effort. As already specified, words are not neatly packaged bundles of meaning, but function as points of access to vast repositories of knowledge relating to a particular concept. Thus, in the often-quoted example *Watch out Jane, your husband's a right bachelor* (EVANS – GREEN 2006), which is at the surface, literal level of interpretation contradictory and represents a logical fallacy, message recipients still have to assume that the sender of the message intended to convey some relevant information and thus search for meaning. In order to infer meaning, they have to resort to encyclopediaic knowledge, more precisely, to recruit their knowledge that certain adult men do not get married, as well as the cultural knowledge, even the stereotype regarding the behaviour of such men, who are free and often flirtatious.

We will define more specifically three components or aspects of encyclopediaic knowledge, accepting Kecskes' (2024) view of encyclopediaic knowledge set in his socio-cognitive model. Encyclopediaic knowledge, which is at the level of concepts, is structured nonlinguistic knowledge activated by a particular linguistic unit. It is the knowledge that we get by interacting with the world and society around us. As such, it encompasses three main components or aspects, which guide meaning construction contextually: 1. experiential, 2. pragmatic and 3. cultural. The experiential component arises from our physical and sensory interaction with the world. For example, the expression of the type *She gave him a bright smile*, where the adjective *bright* means 'happy and full of energy',⁶ activates the experiential aspect of encyclopediaic knowledge, because brightness and light automatically evoke happiness, positive emotions and energy in us. The pragmatic component arises from our experience with language use in expressing more than we mean, i.e., accomplishing indirect speech acts. For example, the expressions of the type *Could you give me that pen?*, which literally ask about someone's ability (*could*) to do something, but implicitly convey the illocution of a request, illustrate the pragmatic aspect of encyclopediaic knowledge (this is governed the conceptual metonymy ABILITY FOR ACTIVITY, THORNBURG – PANTHER 1997). Finally, the cultural component arises from our socio-cultural practice and cultural models. For example, our understanding that the word *bachelor*⁷ does not relate to the Pope, although he is also an adult unmarried man, requires cultural knowledge that the Pope does not get married.

The activation of encyclopediaic meaning relates to both direct and indirect communication strategies, i.e., both to situations in which people say exactly what they mean using literal language and to situations in which people resort to communicating meaning indirectly, non-literally, by using figurative language (metaphors, metonymies), vague language, or allusions. According to Cheng and O'Keefe (2015: 360) vague language is linguistically manifested in a variety of

⁶ <https://www.ldoceonline.com/dictionary/bright>

⁷ The example of *bachelor* is given by Evans and Green (2006: 160).

ways, for instance, in the form of vague additives (vague approximators and vague tags), vague quantifiers, implicature (CHANNELL 1994), vague lexis, vague reference (e.g., nonanaphoric pronouns and adverbs and indefinite pronouns) (CUTTING 2007).

Relating to significant models of communication, Akmajian et al. (2010: 365–388) propose two models of communication. The message model of linguistic communication, which is the traditional model fitting the conduit metaphor (LAKOFF – JOHNSON 1980/2003: 10–12; REDDY 1979), which sees communication as a simple transfer of messages, as encoding and decoding, with speakers encoding and transmitting messages, and hearers decoding and receiving them, messages being transmitted via the vocal-auditory path (the sound wave) as the channel for the transmission (THE MIND IS A CONTAINER, IDEAS ARE OBJECTS, COMMUNICATION IS SENDING IDEAS).

This model faces a number of problematic areas, which it cannot explain, one of them being indirect, implicit communication. The other model which sees communication as an active inferencing process, i.e., the inferential model of linguistic communication (AKMAJIAN et al. 2010: 371–388), is closer to the cognitive linguistic view of meaning and language use, since it encompasses implicit communication, which is a very dominant mode of everyday communication, and which focuses on the fact that meaning is in the minds of the communicators, and that conveying messages is a process which involves complex inferencing strategies, i.e., an active involvement of both communicators. In other words, it recognizes that meaning has to be construed. In the latter model, communication is essentially inferential, and linguistic communication is successful when the hearer, upon hearing an expression, recognizes the speaker's communicative intention. For this to happen, the speaker and the hearer share a system of inferential strategies, but also the same or overlapping encyclopedic knowledge, and are, simultaneously, aware of the situational context in which they are in a particular communication situation. Hearers have the following conversational expectations from speakers (AKMAJIAN et al. 2010: 373): (a) to mean just what they say, i.e., which is literal and direct communication, (b) to not mean what they say, which is non-literal communication, or (c) to mean more than they say, which is indirect communication.

Furthermore, on a cognitive linguistic note, Radden et al. (2007: 2–12) stress that meaning is not in the very linguistic units but is constructed in the minds of the language users, that the process of creating meaning is dynamic, and that underspecification is an essential feature of language in use. More specifically, the authors point to three types of linguistic underspecification manifestation:

- (a) implicitness – linguistic units verbalize meanings implicitly or indirectly. For example, in the expression *The beach is safe*, the word *safe* does not have explicit meaning, but activates the construction of a counterfactive scenario of danger;
- (b) indeterminacy – linguistic units are indeterminate. It means vagueness. For example, *my horse* can mean 'the horse I own', 'the horse I ride', 'the horse I bet on'. Relying on Rühlemann (2007: 75), we add vagueness, i.e., vague language, in this type of underspecification (e.g., *stuff like that, things like that, many, sometimes, ...*).
- (c) incompatibility – linguistic units are incompatible. In the expression *She is married to a library* the semantics of the linguistic units *be married* and

library are incompatible, so the utterance requires meaning construction. Likewise, in the expression *This bank clerk is a clown*, the semantics of the nouns *bank clerk* and *clown* are incompatible when they involve identification. Metaphors and metonymies belong to this type of underspecification.

Finally, Radden et al. (2007) insist on the fact that meaning construction crucially involves the hearer's state of mind, his/her knowledge, beliefs, emotions, which the speaker has to assess in the communication process for the sake of conveying the intended meaning. Similarly, Schwarz-Friesel and Consten (2011: 351) say that hearers 'enrich the information provided by texts by incorporating in it information activated through conceptual instantiation and inferential processing.' The claim by Cutting (2000) goes in the same direction, i.e., it highlights the process of meaning construction and the hearer's role in it; namely, speaking of vague language, she notes that vague language can fail to communicate meanings when the speaker does not assess the hearer's knowledge or state of mind appropriately and does not provide enough background information as well as when the speaker misses the reference and implicatures due to his/her different cultural background.

In this paper, for the sake of greater clarity and straightforwardness, we differentiate between two main types of communication (strategies): direct and indirect, whereas indirect communication has three subtypes: (1) non-literal, (2) illocutionary and (3) vague communication.

First, direct communication is a literal straightforward style in which language is used and interpreted on the basis of its exact, dictionary, explicit meaning, without the need for inferring figurative or additional meaning. Speakers say directly, literally what they mean. Thus, the most important characteristic of direct communication is *directness*, i.e., information is conveyed precisely, to the point, avoiding figurative language and vagueness. There is factual focus, i.e., the focus is on the dictionary, explicit, literal meaning of words and phrases, rather than on possible underlying messages (e.g., *The grass is green. The sky is overcast. Jane's hair is blonde. Yesterday it was snowing. He was wearing a leather jacket. It's nine o'clock.*)

On the other hand, indirect communication conveys meaning through subtle implied messages or hints rather than direct statements. It is based on *implicitness*, i.e., implied meaning, which further requires greater mental effort from hearers to be inferred. Bouex et al. (2023), aiming to determine the cognitive factors of indirect speech acts, conducted experimental research to determine whether there are systematic differences in how direct and indirect replies are perceived. The study showed indirect replies differed from direct replies in that they were perceived as less coherent with their linguistic context, more semantically distant from the linguistic context, less predictable and yielding more uncertain interpretations.

Indirect communication means that speakers do not mean what they say, but express meaning non-literally, or mean more than they say, i.e. resort to indirect speech acts, or express meaning vaguely and ambiguously. Thus, indirect communication encompasses three possible modes (a) *non-literal communication*, involving commonly overstatement and hyperbole, understatement, irony, metaphor, metonymy, (b) *illocutionary communication*, i.e., indirect speech acts, and (c) *vague communication*, based on the use of vague or ambiguous words/ expressions. Thus, the most important characteristic of indirect communication is *implicitness*. In all these

subtypes of indirect communication, words do not convey meaning directly and literally, of which hearers need to be aware and thus search for relevant, intended meaning beyond the literal meaning of the very words and expressions, by recruiting encyclopedic knowledge and relying on the given situational context.

However, the claim made here is that encyclopedic knowledge and situational context commonly play an important role even in the direct communication strategy, especially in the process of estimating whether a particular expression should be interpreted directly, i.e., literally, or indirectly. Namely, even the expressions which seem to be typical examples of direct communication can actually mean more than they say, and thus represent instances of indirect communication. This will be explained taking the examples of direct communication listed above. All these expressions can be taken at face value, as statements of facts, but they could have also additional underlying meanings. Here, just one possible indirect meaning for each expression will be presented, as well as the context and encyclopedic meaning needed for the particular instance of meaning construction.

- *The grass is green.*

This could mean ‘It’s great that it rained yesterday. The grass and the soil have recovered’. This interpretation would be relevant in the context where two people are looking at the grass in front of them, being aware of the long drought during the summer. This conclusion also requires encyclopedic knowledge, its experiential component, relating to our knowledge of the devastating effect of the drought on nature and the benefit of the rain.

- *The sky is overcast.*

This could mean ‘It’s likely rain. Let’s hurry home’ in the context of people being somewhere in the street. This inference also requires our experiential knowledge of the fact that clouds typically mean that it will possibly rain.

- *Jane’s hair is blonde.*

This might mean: ‘Jane dyed her hair; now she’s blonde, but her natural hair is brown’. This inference also requires our experiential knowledge of Jane’s natural hair colour as well as cultural knowledge that women dye their hair.

- *Yesterday it was snowing.*

This might mean: ‘For that reason I spent all day at home’, which requires our experiential knowledge of the fact that some people feel unpleasant in cold, snowy weather.

- *He was wearing a leather jacket.*

This might mean: ‘He looked really good in that jacket’, which requires our cultural knowledge that leather jackets are considered to be trendy.

- *It’s nine o’clock.*

This might mean: ‘Let’s go home; it’s time’. This meaning might be inferred in a situation where a couple is visiting someone, which requires our cultural knowledge about the appropriateness and politeness concerning the length of a visit or taking into consideration possible prearranged obligations or plans to follow.

As can be seen most, if not all, linguistic expressions have the potential of becoming instances of indirect communication depending on the very situational context.

Further on, the role of encyclopedic knowledge and context in indirect communication will be considered relying on representative examples. As stated, in

this view, this communication strategy manifests itself through three subtypes (1) non-literal, (2) illocutionary and (3) vague communication.

- 1) *Non-literal communication* is a type of indirect communication strategy in which speakers do not mean what they say. It is a mode of figurative language use where the intended meaning is different from the literal, dictionary definition of the words and expressions, and is typically used for the sake of conveying extra nuances of meaning and creating extra communicative effect, such as attitudes, emotions, humour, and complex ideas. Common examples include overstatement, understatement, irony or sarcasm, metaphor, metonymy, idioms, proverbs, metaphors, metonymies, idioms, and proverbs. For example:
 - Overstatement and hyperbole: *I've heard this a million times* means 'I'm aware of this; I've heard this many times and I'm irritated'. This interpretation requires the very situational context and the awareness of somewhat tense feelings between the communicators as well as the cultural knowledge that stating facts or attitudes by resorting to impossible, exaggerated situations, might mean that we are frustrated.
 - Understatement: *I'm a little wet* in the context of somebody bursting into a flat soaking wet because it is raining cats and dogs, means 'I'm wet, but I do not want to make a fuss about it', and it recruits again the cultural knowledge that stating facts or attitudes by resorting to toned down language, means that we want to calm tensions. Alternatively, this expression can be understood as ironic: 'I'm totally wet!'.
 - Irony: If a person accidentally breaks a glass and somebody reacts to it saying *You're so coordinated!* instead of saying *You're so clumsy!*, this is irony, recruiting the cultural encyclopedic knowledge according to which we say opposite of what we mean when we want to be ironic and critical.
 - Metaphor: *I'm at a crossroads in my life* means 'I have to make a major life decision'. In order to infer this meaning, we have to be aware of the figurative context that is meant as well as to activate cultural knowledge that we typically think of life as a journey, where there are roads, directions, crossroads, etc. (LIFE IS A JOURNEY conceptual metaphor).
 - Metonymy: *Hollywood has launched a few new stars lately*. Hollywood refers to the American film industry or its celebrities. In order to understand this, we have to activate our cultural knowledge which makes a tight logical link between people and the institution they work for as well as the location of the company (INSTITUTION FOR PEOPLE conceptual metonymy).
 - Idioms: *Stop splitting hairs and focus on the main problem*. The idiom *to split hairs* means 'to argue or focus on very small, unimportant trivial matters'. The motivation of this non-literal meaning lies in our experiential knowledge that it would be impossible and completely unnecessary to try to split hairs literally.
- 2) *Illocutionary communication* is a type of indirect communication strategy in which speakers mean more than what they say; it corresponds to indirect communication according to Akmajian et al. (2010). For example:
 - *It's draughty here. The window is open*. This is an indirect request used instead of asking directly *Please, close the window*. In order to be understood in this way, we have to see the context, the open window, as well as to rely on

the cultural component of encyclopedic knowledge which feeds us with information that people use statements and particular references to make indirect requests.

- *Do you have to stand just here in front of me?* In order to understand this expression as an indirect command meaning ‘Stop blocking the view!’, we have to know the context. For example, there is someone standing just in front of you at a concert. Again, we have to rely on our cultural knowledge of the ways in which we can make requests or order commands indirectly.
 - When meeting an acquaintance in the street, we often say *Hi! How are you (doing)?*, which is an indirect greeting. Owing to the cultural and pragmatic components of encyclopedic knowledge, we know that we should not start telling our life story, but that this expression serves the purpose of a greeting.
- 3) *Vague communication* is a type of indirect communication strategy in which speakers express meaning vaguely and ambiguously. For example, it is interesting to consider the use of the vague word *awesome*. *Awesome* can have at least the following meanings, which depend highly on the context. The general meaning of the word *awesome* is ‘great, superb’. However, the specific realization of this excellence manifests itself differently depending on the context. For example, when it relates to someone’s looks (*You look awesome!*), it means ‘attractive, hot’, when it relates to beer (*This beer is awesome!*), it means ‘cold, tasty’, when it relates to the weather (*This weather is awesome!*), it means ‘mild’, i.e., ‘neither too hot nor too cold, and without precipitation’, when it relates to food (*The food was awesome!*), it means ‘delicious’, when it relates to an idea (*That idea is awesome!*), it means ‘clever, intelligent’, when it relates to a concert (*The concert was awesome!*), it means ‘fun’, etc. (FILIPOVIĆ KOVAČEVIĆ 2021: 45).

Considering ambiguous words or expressions, like *The rabbi married my sister*,⁸ we are not sure whether the rabbi is the one who got married, or the one who guided the wedding ceremony. Here the relevant context makes it clear. Also, we have to have the cultural knowledge that leading the marrying ceremony is one of the rabbi’s official duties.

Finally, in this category we should consider the vagueness of temporal and place adverbials (e.g., *here, there, soon, ...*) and expressions which, depending on the context, might be interpreted relatively (e.g., *in this place, in ten minutes, when she comes, ...*). The significance of the context and encyclopedic knowledge is particularly interesting when interpreting notices on shop windows: *Back in an hour!* or the even more vague and less definite *Be back soon!* In the first example, the starting reference point is unknown (when did the seller leave?), so we do not know when the one-hour period ends. In the latter example the very temporal adverbial, *soon*, itself is also vague.

4. CONCLUDING REMARKS. This paper presents, overviews and discusses particular cognitive linguistic, cognitive pragmatic, socio-cognitive and usage-based approaches to language and communication. Also, it adds to the mentioned views and models particular subdivisions and further explanations regarding the types

⁸ This example is from: <https://www.thoughtco.com/what-is-lexical-ambiguity-1691226>

of communication, specifying direct and indirect communication, whereby indirect communication is seen as manifesting itself through three types: non-literal, illocutionary and vague. Furthermore, the paper focuses on the essential involvement of encyclopedic knowledge and situational context in inferring meaning since communication is seen as an active dynamic process in which speakers choose particular wording in order to convey the intended meaning with or without extra communicative effect (e.g., producing humour, being more polite, making subtle claims, etc.), while hearers closely consider the situational context and construe the most likely meaning in the given scenario by recruiting encyclopedic knowledge. Furthermore, the paper aligns with Kecskes's view of encyclopedic knowledge, which is in synchrony with his socio-cognitive view. However, in the paper it is further specified, i.e., subdivided into three aspects: experiential, pragmatic and cultural. Particular aspects of knowledge are activated in particular contexts, as needed in order to construe meaning. To conclude, meaning arises in a particular context, i.e., discourse context directs the type of encyclopedic knowledge activated by the linguistic unit. Thus, in order to get at the intended meaning, we should invest mental effort, taking into consideration possible word meanings, encyclopedic knowledge and the relevant contextual meaning. Bearing this in mind, in cognitive linguistics there is no difference between competence and performance, knowledge is encyclopedic, knowledge about language is drawn from language use. Furthermore, communicators organize and use linguistic units in the best way possible to convey their intended meaning including nuances of meaning. As seen even in the frequency of the word *use*, the most recent approach tied to a cognitive linguistic view somehow gives privilege to pragmatics, which encompasses semantics as well.

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УЛОГА ЕНЦИКЛОПЕДИЈСКОГ ЗНАЧЕЊА И КОНТЕКСТА
У СТВАРАЊУ ЗНАЧЕЊА

Резиме

Овај рад, у когнитивнолингвистичком оквиру, изучава улогу енциклопедијског знања и ситуационог контекста у процесу извођења значења. Језик у свакодневној употреби често је имплицитан и заснива се на недословним, индиректним или нејасним језичким изразима. Дакле, овакав индиректан језички израз није специфичан и није типичан само за поједине регистре, као што су на пример, регистар рекламирања и дискурс хумора. У свакодневном језику изговарамо и наилазимо на метафоричке изразе (нпр. *Time flies*), метонимијске изразе (нпр. *She likes Monet the most!*), нејасне и двосмислене изразе (нпр. *Be back soon*), изразе који представљају илокуционе говорне чинове (нпр. *I don't like your dress* с функцијом индиректне наредбе 'Go and change it!'). За разумевање свих изрза и оних који представљају директну, дословну комуникацију, а посебно оних који представљају индиректну комуникацију неопходно је познавати контекст, и позвати из меморије релевантно енциклопедијско знање. Циљ овог рада је да представи, продискутује и илуструје улогу енциклопедијског значења и контекста приликом конструисања значења, смештајући ово разматрање у оквире претходног релевантног истраживања у области когнитивне лингвистике, когнитивне прагматике и социо-когнитивног приступа. Такође, рад има за циљ да укаже на два основна типа комуникативних стратегија, директну и индиректну, и да додатно утврди три подтипа индиректне комуникације: недословну, илокуциону и нејасну, које су дефинисане и илустроване релевантим примерима. Такође, у раду се констатују и дефинишу три главне компоненте енциклопедијског значења: искуствена, прагматичка и културолошка, и објашњава се како се оне аутоматски активирају и у сарадњи са ситуационим контекстом постају кључни фактори за извођење намераваног значења комуникатора. Све у свему, примат у новијим приступима унутар когнитивнолингвистичке перспективе посматрања језичких појава припада прагматици, која обухвата и семантику.

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