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## What are you saying when you are talking about...? Procedure for isolating a hidden story in a monologue about the author's own life<sup>4</sup>

### **Abstract:**

Our article describes and illustrates a procedure for isolating a hidden story from a monologue on an assigned topic. The procedure involves four stages: 1) collecting data and preparing transcripts; 2) identifying out-of-key elements; 3) analysing and interpreting a text by means of linguistic and literary theory devices; 4) formulating a hidden story. In deducing a hidden story from narratively out-of-key elements, the vital part was identifying the rules of speech and analysing the contexts in which they were used in the monologue. The hidden story was reconstructed as a one-level narrative pattern on the basis of information inferred from different contexts of using speech rules, as well as from information explicit in the monologue. Our article also discusses the theoretical and clinical value, and new trends in the research on hidden stories.

### **Keywords:**

hidden story, narrations, rules of speech

### **Streszczenie:**

W artykule opisaliśmy oraz zilustrowaliśmy na przykładzie procedurę wyodrębniania opowieści ukrytych z wypowiedzi monologicznych na zadany temat. Procedura obejmowała cztery etapy: 1) zebranie danych i przygotowanie transkrypcji; 2) wyszukanie elementów wyróżniających się narracyjnie; 3) analizę i interpretację tekstu z wykorzystaniem narzędzi lingwistycznych i teoretycznoliterackich.

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kich; 4) sformułowanie opowieści ukrytej. We wnioskowaniu o opowieść ukrytą na podstawie elementów wyróżniających się narracyjnie kluczową rolę odgrywała identyfikacja reguł mówienia oraz analiza kontekstów ich użycia w monologu. Opowieść ukryta była odtwarzana w postaci jednowątkowego schematu fabularnego na podstawie informacji wywnioskowanych z kontekstów użycia reguł mówienia oraz jawnie zawartych w monologu. W artykule omówiliśmy również teoretyczną i kliniczną wartość oraz dalsze kierunki badań nad opowieściami ukrytymi.

**Słowa kluczowe:**

opowieść ukryta, narracje, reguły mówienia

## Theoretical and methodological introduction

The aim of our article is to describe a procedure for isolating a hidden story from a monologue on an assigned topic. We define “hidden story” as a story about the author’s own life, which is accessible to the monologue recipient “indirectly” by conclusions derived from the rules of speech usage, verifiable in linguistics and the theory of literature (see Okopień-Sławińska, 1987).

Hidden stories seem to be an extremely attractive area of psychological study. Firstly, unlike stories told “directly”, they are not influenced by the author’s auto-presentation, which is analogous to implied versus explicit self-esteem (see Bosson, Swann and Pennebaker, 2000). Secondly, being auto-narrations, they serve as identity and motivational mechanisms (Trzebiński, 2002). Thirdly, since suppression is involved, hidden stories generate cognitive bias, thereby, paradoxically, becoming more accessible (see Wegner, Erber and Zanzakos, 1993) and meaningful in self-regulation. If the hidden content (which is usually emotionally important to the author) is not presented as a coherent, complete and plausible story, the result is that the author’s motivation for building such a story is still there (because it has not been used or satisfied), which disrupts the construction of comprehensible auto-narrations about other important life aims (see effect Zeigarnik – Zeigarnik, 1927/1983; “broken stories” – Angus and Bouffard, 2004; “untold stories” – White and Epston, 1990; “unfinished businesses” – Greenberg, 2002; “untold stories ‘relating themselves’ through symptoms” – Grosz, 2014). This might be why uncovering and telling patients’ hidden stories by patients is one of narrative psychotherapy’s aims (e.g. Grosz, 2014; McLeod, 1997; Milner and O’Byrne, 2007; Morgan, 2011). Despite their obvious psychological and clinical importance, hidden stories have not as yet been subject to regular studies.

So far, within phenomenologically and linguistically oriented narrative psychology, researchers have analysed the hidden meaning of words or sentences conveyed in narrations (among others Cierpka, 2013; Chądzyńska, 2012; Dryll, 2008; van Dijk, 1993).

These analyses, however, do not lead to isolating hidden stories. Direct results of such analyses are usually formulated as the frequency rate of key words or topics. On the one hand, such an approach favours objectivity of results, but on the other hand, it severely limits them, as the meaning of an utterance, which is defined through its narrative situation, is lost. As for phenomenological and hermeneutic analysis (e.g. Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2012; Straś-Romanowska, 2008), it aims at a detailed interpretation of an utterance and is supposed to grasp its original meaning. Yet, in the researcher's practice it is by no means an easy task because he or she is supposed to strike a balance between being emphatic in reconstructing the subject's experience by viewing it from this person's perspective, and describing this experience on his or her terms, which he or she sets himself or herself *a priori*. Unfortunately, phenomenological and hermeneutic methodology offers too much discretion as to how the analysed material should be organised. In order to overcome these limitations, researchers employ methods which draw upon the theory of literature and are orientated towards analysing story types (e.g. Sternberg, Hojjat, Barnes, 2001) or their structures (e.g. Trzebiński, 2002). Measurement accuracy in the first approach comes from using psychometrically-tested questionnaire tools, and in the second from including the quantitative agreement rate of competent judges. Unfortunately, neither approach has devised tools enabling researchers to examine stories which do not manifest themselves directly but which are hidden under an openly presented layer of meanings.

Our suggestion as to the method for reconstructing a hidden story from a monologue, in brief, draws on the phenomenological and hermeneutic approach. In our analysis we concentrate on revealing meanings hidden in monologues. We, however, work them out from the rules of language usage, identifiable in linguistics and literary theory, which are used by the speaking person (see Culler, 2000; Okopień-Sławińska, 1987; 2001), and not from empathising with what the speaker communicates, or from assigning the content of an utterance *a priori* to a particular psychological category. Moreover, assuming that important personal experiences have a narrative structure (Bruner, 1991; Trzebiński, 2002), we try to "read" a story hidden in a monologue from the inferred meaning and present it in the form of a narrative pattern (Markiewicz, 1984; see Propp 1928/1976).

Following Wimsatt and Beardsley (1954) and Culler (2002), we assumed that the validity of our interpretation is not determined by the speaking person's intention (what he or she wants to convey) but by the meaning carried in an utterance (what he or she manages to convey). The author of a monologue, similar to a patient talking about himself at a therapeutic session, is not necessarily going to say what he or she says indirectly. It does not mean that an utterance can be interpreted freely, or that there are many

plausible interpretations. According to Culler (2000, p.81), a person who is doing the interpreting should be able to convince other people that his or her interpretation is correct. We applied this principle in our procedure. Two psychologists analysed and interpreted the monologues, while the other two team members (a specialist in Polish studies and another psychologist) judged their results. In the next part of the article we present how we prepared, analysed and interpreted the monologues and in what way we formulated the hidden story.<sup>5</sup> Then we proceed to describe our approach in greater detail, focusing on one monologue about life changes as an example. For the sake of the article, from a set of thirty monologues we chose the shortest one. The following procedure applies to each monologue analysed by us.

## Description of procedure

### Stage 1. Collecting data and preparing transcripts

The subject was asked to speak for ten minutes about “the most important changes which have recently happened in his or her life”. The researcher (who also recorded the monologue) was supposed not to ask any additional questions so as to minimise his influence on the course of the monologue. In case of possible questions asked by the subject (e.g. What else shall I say? Can I finish now?), the researcher could only give brief pre-determined responses: “As you wish.” or “It’s up to you”. The next step was to prepare an accurate transcript of the monologue which included punctuation marks, interjections (so-called language supports e.g. *well*), sounds of hesitation (e.g. *er*, *yyy*) as well as distinct extra-verbal elements (e.g. drumming your fingers on the table).

### Stage 2. Identifying out-of-key elements

At least two team members (one of the psychologists and the specialist in Polish studies) read a monologue a few times in order to isolate narratively out-of-key elements. We assumed that they comprise everything that, in the context of a monologue, general rules of language usage or instructions given to the subject, seems “different” or “doesn’t fit”, “doesn’t sound”, “attracts attention” or “jars”. We concentrated mainly on the language aspect of a monologue, avoiding snap judgements and interpretations. Subsequent analysis involved all the elements which had been found distinguishable by at least one of the researchers.

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<sup>5</sup> The procedure described here was adopted in the analysis of monologues on being brought up and bringing up children (Kuncewicz, Sokołowska, Sobkowicz, 2014b, 2015). Also, within our graduate seminars dissertations are being prepared in which students analyse monologues about relationships, life changes, motivation to help and the process of “building up” femininity.

### **Stage 3. Analysing and interpreting the text using out-of-key elements**

We assumed that some elements of a monologue stand out because they are traces left in the language material of the author's intentions to emphasise or conceal certain topics from the recipient (see Dryll, 2014, p.74). These traces are observable because in order to realise his or her intentions, the author uses – in an individualised way – the rules of language usage which are universal in his or her environment or violates these rules (see Grice, 1975; vanDijk, 1997). We think that average language sensitivity and reading a text carefully is enough to recognise some of these traces. Nevertheless, to determine what this individualisation or violation of language usage conventions is requires philosophical knowledge. Therefore, we accomplished this stage under the supervision of our expert in Polish studies. We also consulted a number of dictionaries (Polish, foreign words, literary terms and a phraseological dictionary) as well as monographs on linguistics and literary theory. Ways of utilising key literary theory devices (among others: types and changes of narration, the author's style, defining time, location and events) in psychological analysis and monologue interpretation were described by Kuncewicz, Sokołowska and Sobkowicz (2014a, 2014b, 2015).

First, we determined if the distinctiveness of a given element refers to any linguistic or literary theory category, and if so, what function it serves in common language usage (Why is it usually used or not used?). Next, we analysed the narrow and broader context of using a particular category in a monologue (Why does the speaker use it right here?). The narrow context comprises the content located immediately "in front of" or "behind" an out-of-key element, whereas the content within the wider context is located further from this distinctive element and is included in the instruction. Analysing the textual contexts of using or violating established speaking conventions allowed us to draw valid conclusions about the speaking person, that is, the author of a monologue.

We reached our conclusions by following "the quantitative rule", according to which the credibility of an interpretative hypothesis depends on the amount of coherent information which is explicit as well as implicit in a monologue. It means that if there are a few alternative plausible interpretative hypotheses, we choose the one with the greatest amount of coherent information as more credible and thus superior to the others. Our assumption corresponds to Markiewicz's thesis (1984), according to which the larger the surface area of a text and the greater the number of its components, the more valid an interpretation is.

At this stage the feedback we received was presented to us orally. We heard arguments in favour of individual interpretative hypotheses. The psychologist and the Polish studies specialist, who provided the feedback, were supposed to find gaps and flaws in the choice of arguments (including linguistic and literary theory ones) and in the line

of reasoning. Interpretative hypotheses accepted by all the team members, both those who did the interpreting and those who gave the feedback, are referred to as interpretative conclusions.

#### **Stage 4. Formulating a hidden story**

The result of analysing and interpreting out-of-key elements by means of speech rules and contexts in which they were used in a monologue was a collection of interpretative conclusions about the author. Even at this stage of analysing and interpreting the text, the information contained in interpretative conclusions and explicit in a monologue constituted a meaningful whole. Therefore, the final stage of the procedure was to present this whole as a straightforward one-level narrative pattern (see Markiewicz, 1984). In order to accomplish this pattern, we drew on a collection of inferred information as well as information explicit in the monologue to form short simple sentences reflecting motives (events) in which the main character's position changes significantly in terms of his fate, personality or knowledge (*ibid*; see Friedman, 1967). Following Markiewicz (1984), we presumed that the motives included in the narrative pattern might be external (physical) or internal (mental), mutational (directly causing changes in the character's situation) or static (concerning his states or qualities). Considering the language aspect, we made sure that the formed sentences contained the narrator's vocabulary and syntax, as they are irreplaceable means of conveying personal meanings. We also incorporated words, phrases or even whole sentences which originally had not been used in a monologue only if we thought they represented a particular motif more precisely. Next, we put the isolated motifs in chronological and cause-and-effect order to obtain a relationally and referentially coherent structure constituting a hidden story (see Ślawiński, 2010).

This hidden story was presented to the team members responsible for feedback, who gave their suggestions, and subsequently modified it according to their suggestions. The appraisal of the hidden story involved the legitimacy of isolating particular motifs, the accuracy of wording, its narrative coherence and emotional sense. Hidden stories are usually hidden because they contain personal subject matter which is emotionally important to the narrator. Therefore, a reconstructed hidden story cannot be banal. It carries weight (after all, it is about human life) and somehow should arouse the recipient's emotions.

Hidden stories, like any fictional pattern, can be further analysed in terms of their constructive features. Following Markiewicz (1984), we classified stories according to: the main character (active or passive), the situation (modifying the character's fate, personality or knowledge), and the change contour (gradational, contrastive and stabilising). Slightly modifying Markiewicz's terminology, the gradational contour of a story can be considered *positive* when the character's situation, which is initially good, gets

better (+) → (++) and *negative* when his situation, which is initially bad (−) → (--) gets worse. The contrastive contour is *positive and negative* when an initially good situation turns into a bad one: (+) → (−); it is *negative and positive* when an initially bad situation transforms into a good one: (−) → (+). The stabilising contour can be *positive* when the character's situation, which is initially good, remains good (+) → (+); or *negative* when a bad situation remains bad: (−) → (−). Alternative possibilities of analysing and classifying hidden stories are provided by the phase model of narration, which can be divided into three phases: the commencement, the development and the denouement of action (see e.g. Sławiński, 2010a) or the self-narrative schema (Trzebiński, 2002), which comprises the main character's intentions, complications which arise when he tries to realise his intentions and possibilities for overcoming these complications.

## An example of using the procedure

### Data on the subject and the study

The subject was a 32-year-old male, a science teacher in a lower secondary school. He had been married for five years. The man was asked to deliver a ten-minute-long monologue on the following theme: "Tell me about the most important changes in your life". The recording time was two minutes and forty seconds.

### Transcript of the monologue

*Now then. So in my life little has changed. I mean, nothing has changed. First, a child wasn't born because it was to have been born but wasn't. Things were to have changed but didn't change. Second, as for the job, again there are problems as there were before. If truth be told, we found a tenant but it means, generally, the thing is that as it was unstable and was without, without, er, well, it's hard for me to say, for example to look into the future farther than half a year, isn't it? And this is probably the greatest problem of all because, because it is hard for me to say if I will stay in my current job longer than half a year, if the tenant won't back out and... Shall I speak in such a way that , er, that everybody can understand, okay then, if the tenant won't back out and if there won't be any problems again, er. And when for example Iwona has a change of heart, er... and wants to have a child, er. Besides, granny has fallen ill, it was at home in Jasło my granny, she will also be moving out of this world, rather, yet it's hard to say because she has such a strange illness, I mean a strange illness of a senile type that one rather suffers from it than dies. Well, er, I don't know what else I can say about changes... We have bought a Kindle, haven't we. Is it already ten minutes? Oh, Jesus, so I don't know what else I should say. I have already exhausted the most important topics. And shall we for ten minutes... are you going to keep recording for ten minutes? Okay, thanks then.*

## Analysis of text interpretation

In each of the following tables, in the first paragraph we placed an out-of-key element or a sequence of a few such elements, set in bold type, together with their immediate context. In the next paragraph we included short linguistic and/or literary theory descriptions of the out-of-key elements and their possible functions in common language usage. Under the tables we recapitulated the consecutive stages of inferring the hidden story from the functions of the out-of-key elements as well as the narrow and wider context in which they were used. We ended each stage with one or more interpretative conclusions about the author of the monologue. We marked them with the letter C in bold type and numbered them in order of being formulated.

**Table 1.**

|                         |  |
|-------------------------|--|
| elements, context       | <b>Now then. So in my life little</b> has changed. I mean, <b>nothing</b> has changed. First, a child wasn't born because it was to have been born but wasn't. Things were to have changed but didn't change.  |
| description [functions] | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* <b>Now then</b> (a rough translation of Polish <i>teraz tak</i>): an expression which includes the adverb of circumstances <i>teraz</i> (now) [defines the circumstances of an event which here, in the research situation, is the act of speaking] and the adverbial pronoun <i>tak</i> (<i>in this way, like this</i>) [answers the question “how?”, relates to the activity defined by <i>teraz</i> (now), i.e. speaking], a directive act of speaking [performs the function of an imperative determining the manner in which an act of speaking is done];</li> <li>* <b>Now then. So in my life</b>: a parallel change of the sender [from the author of the utterance to the chief narrator] and of the recipient [from the chief narrator in the role of the recipient to the addressee of the narration].</li> <li>* <b>So</b>: a conjunction at the beginning of a sentence [starting to enumerate activities, events, etc.].</li> <li>* <b>little (...) nothing</b>: correcting oneself [gradation, heightening the uncompromising character of judgement]</li> </ul> |

According to the instruction (*Tell me about the most important changes in your life*), the author was supposed to talk about important changes in his life. In the first sentence he orders himself as the chief narrator that *now* (in the research situation) he should talk about these changes *tak* (Polish: in a specific way). Starting the next sentence with *so* implies that this particular way of talking about changes might consist in enumerating them. However, the author says that *little* has changed in his life, and after that he further strengthens the uncompromising character of his utterance by saying that *nothing* has changed. Next, he goes on to specify *what was to have changed but didn't*.

Why does the author, contrary to the researcher's instructions, order himself to speak about changes in his life in a rather peculiar manner of listing life situations that have not changed? The directive character of the speech act (*Teraz tak* – literally: *Now in this way*) implies that the author wants to control his way of talking about the changes. If he was not controlling it, he could speak about the changes in his life which have recently

been the most important to him, thereby “revealing himself” to the recipient. He does not want to talk about it, which suggests that he refuses to disclose something that is personally important to him. Imposing on himself the manner of speaking which is in disagreement with the instructions indicates that the thoughts about the absence of changes are easily accessible to the author from the very start of the monologue. Presenting them in the extreme categories of “everything or nothing” suggests that they are very difficult to judge, which indicates their distinctly emotional character. Summing up, the thoughts related to *what was to have changed but didn't change* are personally important to the author, easily accessible and distinctly emotional (**C1**).

**Table 2.**

|                         |   |
|-------------------------|---|
| elements, context       | <i>Nothing has changed. First, a child wasn't born because it was to have been born but wasn't. Things were to have changed but didn't change. Second, as for the job, again there are problems as there were before.</i> |
| description [functions] | * <b>First (...) second:</b> using the rhetorical [persuasive function] and/or scientific style [emphasising the “logic” of the argumentation]  |

The author tries to convince (the listener? himself?) that something bad is happening in his life and that the situation has not improved, as *nothing has changed*. He gives more arguments to prove lack of anticipated changes: *a child wasn't born (...) again there are problems with the job as there were before*. Although the thoughts about what *was to have changed but didn't* are personally important, easily accessible and distinctly emotional (see C1), the author concentrates on the facts and “logic” of the arguments and not on their emotional aspect. Thus, he avoids a direct expression of emotions connected with what *was to have changed but didn't* (**C2**).

**Table 3.**

|                         |   |
|-------------------------|---|
| elements, context       | <i>First, a child wasn't born because it was to have been born but wasn't.</i>  |
| description [functions] | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* <b>because:</b> a conjunction [connecting two autonomous sentences, introducing a sentence which explains the meaning of the previous sentence];</li> <li>* <b>was to have been born:</b> the potential form of the verb <i>be born</i> in the past tense [expresses reference to prior expectations, agreements, plans or intentions];</li> <li>* <b>a child wasn't born because it was to have been born:</b> relational incoherence [the fact that the child was to have been born implies that the child wasn't born]</li> </ul> |

The author explains the fact that the child was not born by referring to the plan or intention, according to which it *was to have been born*. In other words, he accounts for the non-occurrence of a certain fact by saying that it was planned. This explanation is illogical. It is lacking in some additional information which would enable us to understand how the plan or intention, according to which a child *was to have been born* is connected with the fact that eventually it wasn't born. Did something happen that thwarted the

plan? Or maybe the plan itself changed? Whose plan? The author's or his partner's? Or perhaps it was their joint plan? Omitting the key information about the reason why the plan failed suggests that this information is of a rather personal character and that the author would rather not reveal it in the research situation. However, at the general level it can be speculated that *a child wasn't born* because something happened which made it impossible to carry out the plan according to which it *was to have been born* (**C3**).

**Table 4.**

|                         |   |
|-------------------------|---|
| elements, context       | <i>a child wasn't born because it was to have been born but wasn't. Things were to have changed but didn't change (...) as for the job, again there are problems as there were before. (...) as it was unstable and was without, without, er, well, it's hard for me to say</i>   |
| description [functions] | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* <i>was to have (...) but wasn't (...) were to have changed (...) but didn't (...) again there are (...) as there were before (...) as it was (...) and was</i>: repetitions typical of syntactic parallelisms [expressive function, enhancing the message];</li> <li>* <i>Things were to have changed but didn't</i>: in the Polish version of the sentence the subject is omitted [vagueness or an attempt to hide information about "things" that were to have changed]</li> </ul> |

Syntactic parallelisms enhance the emotional charge of the message about the absence of anticipated changes, which assumes the character of a lament: a piece of writing expressing crying, anguish and helplessness in the face of adversity (Kostkiewiczowa, 2010). Thus, the statement about the absence of anticipated changes expresses the crying, anguish and helplessness felt by the author (**C4a**). Yet, the object of the author's lamentation is not clearly defined. Although the author explicitly speaks about unfulfilled expectations concerning a child and his job, he completely leaves out the information about what changed in his life in connection with it. At the same time the sentence: *Things were to have changed but didn't*, immediately follows the sentence: *A child was to have been born but wasn't*. It suggests that a child's birth was to change something in the author's life but he is not explicit about it (**C4b**).

**Table 5.**

|                         |   |
|-------------------------|---|
| elements, context       | <i>First, a child wasn't born because it was to have been born but wasn't. Things were to have changed but didn't change. Second, as for the job, again there are problems as there were before. If truth be told, we found a tenant but it means, generally, the thing is that as it was unstable and was without, without, er, well, it's hard for me to say</i>  |
| description [functions] | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* <i>If truth be told</i>: an expression in the function of an adversative conjunction [the information preceding the conjunction undermines the information following it];</li> <li>* <i>but</i>: an adversative conjunction [the information preceding the conjunction undermines the information following it]</li> </ul> |

At first, the author questions the gravity of his problems concerning the job saying that they *found a tenant*. Next, he proceeds to question the significance of finding a tenant, as this fact does not solve a more general problem connected with instability and with something the author finds difficult to talk about (*generally, the thing is that as it was unstable and was without, without, er, well, it's hard for me to say*). The author does not question, however, the significance of the fact that a child wasn't born. On the contrary, he emphasises it when he starts his line of argument about the absence of changes with this very fact (*First, a child wasn't born*) and adds (*because it was to have been born but wasn't*). Thus, it can be concluded that the author is much more concerned about the fact that the child was not born than about his problems with the job or the tenant (C5a). Thus, the general problem of instability refers rather to his personal than professional life. It has to do with the fact that the child was not born and with the absence of something the author finds difficult to talk about (C 5b).

**Table 6.**

|                         |   |
|-------------------------|---|
| elements, context       | <i>as it was unstable and was without, without, er, well, it's hard for me to say (...)</i> if I will stay in my current job longer than half a year; if the tenant won't back out (...). And when for example Iwona has a change of heart, er... and wants to have a child, er.                          |
| description [functions] | * <b>without</b> : preposition [communicating the absence of something or somebody];<br>* <b>without, without, er</b> : repetition of the preposition <i>without</i> , using the language support <i>well</i> , breaking off after the word <i>without</i> [difficulty or unwillingness to talk about it] |

The author explicitly (*well, it's hard for me to say*) and implicitly (repeating a pronoun, using a language support, breaking off in the middle of a sentence) expresses his difficulty in talking about something that is missing in his life and has to do with instability. He implies what it is by giving examples of problems: job insecurity (*will I stay in my current job longer than half a year*), the tenant (*won't the tenant back out*) and his partner (*And when for example Iwona has a change of heart, er... and wants to have a child, er.*). The only example concerning his partner is the one related to the fact that a child was not born. Therefore, it is legitimate to presume that the author finds it difficult to speak especially about things that refer to his partner's instability concerning her decision to have a child (C6).

**Table 7.**

|                         |   |
|-------------------------|---|
| elements, context       | <i>because, because it is hard for me to say if I will stay in my current job longer than half a year, if the tenant won't back out and... Shall I speak in such a way that, er, that everybody can understand, okay then, if the tenant won't back out and if there won't be any problems again, er. And when for example Iwona has a change of heart, er... and wants to have a child</i>   |
| description [functions] | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* <b><i>if the tenant won't back out (...)</i></b> <i>if the tenant won't back out</i>: repetition typical of anaphora [expressive or delaying function, heightening text coherence];</li> <li>* <b><i>tenant won't back out and...</i></b>: stopping in mid-sentence and pausing [difficulty in talking about certain things, problems with constructing and selecting structures and language elements];</li> <li>* <b><i>Shall I speak in such a way that, er, that everybody can understand</i></b>: change of the communication level to extratextual [increasing the distance to the content of the monologue];</li> <li>* <b><i>again</i></b>: a particle [expressing impatience with the repetitiveness of the event];</li> <li>* <b><i>er</i></b>: a language support (interjection) [difficulty or unwillingness to talk about something]</li> </ul> |

The author stops enumerating arguments (problems with the job and the tenant) and makes a pause, which signals his problem with talking about instability in his life. Next, he dissociates himself from what he is saying and offers to speak to an indeterminate wide audience (*Shall I speak in such a way that, er, that everybody can understand, okay then*) Thanks to the pause and moving to the extratextual communication level he gains time to consider his next words and give his speech a “public”, less personal character. The author’s return to the intratextual level starts with repeating the last phrase (*won’t the tenant back out*) in order to increase the coherence of utterance. Yet, once again he reduces the personal character of the speech by saying *any problems*. Using the particle *again* with reference to *any problems* indicates the author’s impatience, and thus a distinctly personal and emotional reaction to the repetitiveness of an event. Putting the interjection *er* after the phrase *any problems* reflects the author’s difficulty in talking in a personal manner about what makes him impatient. In the next sentence (*And when for example Iwona has a change of heart, er... and wants to have a child*) the author gives an example, which signals that eventually he has made up his mind to expand on his utterance about what he finds difficult to talk about and what makes him impatient. Summing up, the author finds it difficult to talk about something that makes him impatient and is connected with his partner; namely that she might have a change of heart about having a child (C7).

**Table 8.**

|                         |  |
|-------------------------|--|
| elements, context       | <i>if the tenant won't back out and if there won't be any problems again, er. And when for example Iwona has a change of heart, er... and wants to have a child, er. Besides, granny has fallen ill</i>  |
| description [functions] | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* <b>back out</b> (translation of Polish <i>zbiesić się</i>): an Old Polish word [formerly meaning “become infuriated”, “go into a rage”, now has evolved into: ”decide not to do something you were planning to do or promised to do];</li> <li>* <b>has a change of heart</b> (translation of Polish <i>odwidzi się</i>): a colloquial word [meaning “she will change her attitude”, “she will no longer like it”, “she will be fussy”] untypical to use when referring to somebody’s readiness to have a child];</li> <li>* <b>has a change of heart, er...</b>: a pause [problems with constructing and selecting structures and language elements];</li> <li>* <b>er (...) er</b>: two interjections (language supports) in close proximity [either particular difficulty or unwillingness to talk about something];</li> <li>* <b>this</b> (an approximate equivalent of the Polish word <i>ten</i>): a shortened form of “ten tego” (this and that) [applying to an activity, situation, fact or state which the sender does not want or cannot define]</li> </ul> |

Both untypical words: *zbiesić się* (*back out*) and *odwidzieć* (*have a change of heart*) have a lot in common: close proximity in the text, the theme of instability (the tenant’s and the partner’s) and the power to weaken emotional expression. In the first case, the emotional expression is undermined by the word’s archaism – nowadays it is rarely used to denote the state of going into a rage or getting annoyed. In the other case the emotional expression is weakened due to the untypical use of the word *odwidzieć* (*have a change of heart*). This word usually refers to a whim or a change of a liking, which does not lead to any far-reaching consequences. However, in the monologue it was used to define rather important changes which occurred in their relationship concerning his partner’s intention not to have a child. The aforementioned findings suggest that the author’s emotions connected with the tenant’s and his partner’s instability are negative and stronger than their manifestation in the monologue (**C8a**). Using the language support *ten* (*this*) after the words *odwidzi* (*has a change of heart*) and *child*, making a pause after the phrase *odwidzi ten* (*has a change of heart, er...*) and obviously wandering off the subject (*Besides, granny has fallen ill*) after the word *a child* all imply that the author finds it particularly difficult to speak or might not want to speak about the changes concerning his partner’s intention of having a child (**C8b**).

**Table 9.**

|                         |  |
|-------------------------|--|
| elements, context       | <i>Iwona has a change of heart, er... and wants to have a child, er. Besides, granny has fallen ill, it was <b>at home in Jasło</b> my granny, she will also be moving out of this world, rather</i>   |
| description [functions] | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* <b>at home in Jasło</b>: a parenthetic remark [exposing information which is important to the author], the only specification of place in the text [indicates its significance to the author or the need to provide the listener with more details because another home or house is also being talked about], the only description in the text [presents static elements of the presented world];</li> <li>* <b>home</b>: an ambiguous noun [its prototypical meaning: flat, house, building, household, family or the whole of matters related to the family and household];</li> <li>* <b>my</b>: the only possessive pronoun used with reference to a person [what is expressed by the noun following this pronoun belongs to, applies to, or is particularly liked by the speaker]</li> </ul> |

Applying the pronoun *my* only to granny and specifying only her place of living (*at home in Jasło*) suggests that the author likes his grandmother in particular. Thus, *home in Jasło* has a personal meaning to the author (household, family); it does not signify merely a building or a flat. It holds positive associations for him. Moreover, being described in the greatest detail and, in consequence, as the most static element of the presented world, *home in Jasło* can be associated with something stable. However, the home in Jasło, from which his grandmother *will be moving out* as well as the one "built" with his partner, who might *have a change of heart* about having a child are currently not stable in the author's perception. Parallelism, close proximity of both themes concerning instability, difficulty in speaking explicitly about his situation, his partner or a child (see C8b) all suggest that the author, while speaking about his grandmother's moving out, might be inexplicitly referring to something that has to do with the instability of his relationship with his partner (C9).

**Table 10.**

|                         |  |
|-------------------------|--|
| elements, context       | <i>My granny <b>will also be moving out of this world, rather, although</b> it's hard to say because she has such a strange illness, I mean a strange illness of a senile type <b>that one rather suffers from it than dies</b>.</i>   |
| description [functions] | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* <b>also</b>: referential incoherence [it is unclear to whom the inclusive particle <i>also</i> refers];</li> <li>* <b>will be moving out of this world</b>: an euphemism for "die" [a phrase softening a "stronger" definition you want to avoid];</li> <li>* <b>rather</b>: a particle [expresses the speaker's hesitation over what judgement he should make; it also serves to cancel the previous judgement and replace it with a new one which better characterises a given fact];</li> <li>* <b>although</b>: an adversative conjunction (the information preceding it undermines the information following it);</li> <li>* <b>one rather suffers from it than dies</b>: a shift from the third person to the impersonal form, in the Polish version using the reflexive pronoun <i>się</i> [universalising judgement, applied to a community doing an activity]</li> </ul> |

The author does not specify who else, apart from his grandmother, *will be moving out of this world*. The phrase *move out of this world* is a euphemism for the word “die”, so the particle *also* might refer to a child who had died before it was born (e.g. as a result of miscarriage or abortion). However, the sentence *will be moving out* is formulated in the future tense, which might suggest that the child has already “moved into” this world and is currently staying here. Yet, the author stresses twice that a child *wasn’t born* (see Table 3), which means that it “didn’t move into” this world and is not staying here. And if it is not staying here, it cannot be moving out of it. So who and from where should be *also* moving out?

If the author, while talking about his grandmother moving out, is implicitly communicating something that is related to the instability of his relationship (see C9), he might as well mean that either he or his partner is going to move out of the relationship. The premise that the partner will be moving out of the relationship might be based on the instability of her intention to have a child (see C8b) or acting against the author’s plan to have a child be born (see C3). The premise that the author will be moving out of the relationship might be his impatience with his partner’s instability concerning a child (see C7) or his disappointment at the absence of an important change which would be brought about by a child’s birth (see C4b). The second thesis is better proved in the text. On speaking about his grandmother’s suffering, the author “slides” into the impersonal form, accompanied – in the Polish version – by the reflexive pronoun *się* (*one rather suffers than dies*), which suggests that he does not mean merely his grandmother’s suffering. The only person whose distress he (indirectly) expresses in the monologue is himself (see C4a). Therefore, it can be concluded that the author, when speaking about his grandmother’s suffering, means his misery as well (**C 10a**). The particle *also* most probably applies to the author himself. If this is the case, the author has considered the possibility of “moving out” of his relationship (**C 10b**).

If the author, while talking about his grandmother’s suffering, indirectly refers to his own misery, we must presume that he is unlikely to *move out of* his relationship. It is proved by his using the conjunction *although*, which undermines the statement about moving out (*will be moving out [...] although it is hard to say*) and using the particle *rather* twice. The first *rather* signals hesitation (*will be moving out [...] rather*), the second one revokes the judgement about moving out in favour of a painful continuation of the present situation. Summing up, the author is unlikely to move out of his relationship. He will continue his relationship, even if it is painful (**C 10c**).

**Table 11.**

|                         |   |
|-------------------------|---|
| elements, context       | <i>that you rather suffer from it than die. Well, er, I don't know what else I can say about changes... We have bought a Kindle, haven't we. Is it already ten minutes? Oh, Jesus, so I don't know what else I should say. I have already exhausted the most important topics. And shall we for ten minutes, are you going to keep recording for ten minutes? Okay, thanks then</i>   |
| description [functions] | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* <b>Well, er, I don't know what else I can say about changes...</b>: a change from the intratextual to extratextual communication level [increasing the distance to the content of the monologue]; a pause in the speech [problem with constructing and selecting structures or language elements];</li> <li>* <b>We have bought a Kindle</b>: a single short narration (in the first person) conducted at the lowest intratextual level, included in the longer narration at the extratextual level [a short-lasting reduction of the distance to the content of the monologue];</li> <li>* <b>Oh, Jesus</b>: a prepositional phrase which functions as an exclamation [expresses strong emotional states or the speaker's state of will]</li> </ul> |

After the utterance indirectly referring to suffering in his relationship (see C10c), the author explicitly (*Well, er, I don't know what else I can say about changes*) and implicitly (breaking off) expresses that it is hard for him to continue speaking about the changes. Consequently, with the exception of the short sentence: *We have bought a Kindle*, he stays outside the presented world until the end of his monologue and directly addresses only the researcher. At the same time there is tangible tension between the author's attempt to fulfil the researcher's expectations (*Is it already ten minutes? Oh, Jesus, so I don't know what else I should say*) and his avoidance of talking about matters which are difficult for him. In the context of disagreement between the partners about a child (see C3, 9,10b), the sentence about buying a Kindle (an e-book reader) seems to be inadequate and trivial. It implies a ridiculous story about a relationship in which the partners are united not by their child but by an object of individual use. Purchasing a Kindle follows the convention of auto-irony, in which blatant banality points to the protagonist's hidden tragedy. Using auto-irony suggests the speaker's distance to the content of the monologue and his attempt to present it in a creative way (Okopień-Sławińska, 2010). Summing up, the author manages to maintain distance from the difficult experiences in his relationship and transform them in a creative way; which proves that he has effective means of coping with these problems (**C11**).

**Table 12.**

|                         |  |
|-------------------------|--|
| elements, context       | <i>We have bought a Kindle, haven't we. Is it already ten minutes? Oh, Jesus, so I don't know what else I should say. I have already exhausted the most important topics. And shall we for ten minutes (...), are you going to keep recording for ten minutes? Okay, thanks then</i>   |
| description [functions] | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* <b>And shall we for ten minutes (...)</b>: breaking off after the word <i>minutes</i> [problem with constructing and selecting structures and language elements];</li> <li>* <b>shall we (...) are you going</b>: correcting himself by changing the personal form "we" to "you" [increases the adequacy of using a personal form when addressing the researcher];</li> <li>* <b>for ten minutes, for ten minutes</b>: repetition [expressive function, gaining time to correct the personal form]</li> </ul> |

The author breaks off a sentence made in the personal form “we” and corrects himself, using the form “you.” Why? He could ask the researcher for example the following question: *And what shall we “do” for ten minutes?* (as the topics have been exhausted and the recording time has not finished). The adequacy of such a question would not be lower than the question he eventually asks (*are you going to keep recording for ten minutes?*). The author might consider the form “we” inadequate to refer to himself and the listener because he has just applied it to himself and his partner when he mentioned buying a Kindle together. Furthermore, he might realise the inadequacy of the question he has just asked the researcher because the content of the statement about his relationship is still active and is mixing with the content of the question. He could put the same question to himself and his partner; for example *And what shall we do next?* (meaning: How shall we continue our life together? Living together in one place but apart, taking turns in reading e-books?).

Since the changes awaited by the author have not taken place so far (see C4a) and since the changes concern the need for stabilizing the relations with his partner (see C5b, 6, 9), it can be concluded that the relationship has gone through a difficult phase before (**C 12a**). In line with the earlier findings, a new child was supposed to significantly change something in the author’s life (see C 4b). Thus, it can be reasonably presumed that a child, at least in the author’s intention, was to have been born to cause that the couple no longer stayed apart and to ensure the stability of the relationship (**C 12b**). The author’s lamentation over the absence of the anticipated changes (see C4a) suggests that he is embittered about the fact that the child failed to fulfil its “relationship-cementing” stabilising role (**C 12c**).

### **Formulating a hidden story**

Analysing the consecutive out-of-key elements we concluded that: 1) The thoughts related to *what was to have changed but didn’t change* are personally important to the author, easily accessible and of a distinctly emotional character; 2) The author avoids a direct expression of emotions connected with *what was to have changed but didn’t*; 3) *A child wasn’t born* because something happened which made it impossible to carry out the plan according to which it *was to have been born*; 4a) The statement about the absence of anticipated changes expresses the crying, anguish and helplessness felt by the author; 4b) A child’s birth was to change something in the author’s life but he is not explicit about it; 5a) The author is much more concerned about the fact that the child was not born than about his problems with the job or the tenant; 5b) The general problem of instability refers rather to his personal than professional life. It has to do with the fact that the child was not born and with the absence of something the author finds difficult to talk about; 6) The author finds it difficult to speak especially about things that refer

to his partner's instability concerning her decision to have a child; 7) The author finds it difficult to talk about something that makes him impatient and is connected with his partner; namely that she might have a change of heart about having a child; 8a) The author's emotions connected with the tenant's and his partner's instability are negative and stronger than their manifestation in the monologue; 8b) The author finds it particularly difficult to speak or might not want to speak about the changes concerning his partner's intention of having a child; 9) The author, while speaking about his grandmother's moving out, might be inexplicitly referring to something that has to do with the instability of his relationship with his partner; 10a) The author, when speaking about his grandmother's suffering, means his misery as well; 10b) The author has considered the possibility of "moving out" of his relationship; 10c) The author is unlikely to move out of his relationship. He will continue his relationship, even if it is painful; 11) The author manages to maintain distance from the difficult experiences in his relationship and transform them in a creative way; which proves that he has effective means of coping with these problems; 12a) The relationship has gone through a difficult phase before; 12b) A child, at least in the author's intention, was to have been born to cause that the couple no longer stayed apart and to ensure the stability of the relationship; 12c) The author is embittered about the fact that the child failed to fulfil its "relationship-cementing" stabilising role.

On the basis of the aforementioned conclusions we isolated narrative motifs and put them in the chronological and cause-and-effect order. We designated them in the following way: A, B, C, E, F, G, H. In order to ensure the story's coherence we incorporated Motif D, which had been isolated from the information which was explicit in the monologue. Below we present a general outline of the hidden story, together with references to the key interpretative conclusions, on which we based our story:

- A. We were apart in our relationship (1, 12a)
- B. A child was supposed to unite us / provide stability (2, 3, 4b, 5a, 7, 8, 9, 12b)
- C. But Iwona had a change of heart about a child (3, 6, 7, 8a, 8b, 10a)
- D. And a child was not born
- E. Inside me is a plaintive cry, suffering and helplessness (1, 3, 4a, 10a, 12c)
- F. We are apart again (1, 12a)
- G. I am going to move out of this relationship (9, 10b)
- H. Yet, I will rather stay in this relationship (10c, 11)

Utilising Markiewicz's typology (1984), it can be concluded that the main character of the story is initially passive and later he becomes active. His personality undergoes modification (a sequence of events E → F → G → H) with a positive contrastive contour (G → H). However, his fate does not receive modification. It has a definite negative sta-

bilising contour (A=F). On the basis of the phase model of narration (see Ślawiński, 2010, pp.147–148) it can be concluded that Motifs A and B constitute the commencement, C, D and E – the development and the climax and F, G and H – the denouement of action, while the teleological model of the self-narrative schema (Trzebiński, 2002) enables us to infer lack of definite intention by the main character; obvious complications (C, D) and a negative outcome (E, F).

## **Final conclusions**

The described procedure of isolating hidden stories from monologues has great potential both for scientific research and clinical diagnosis: it seems to be of potential usefulness especially in psychotherapy. On the one hand, it engages mental processes which are applied in therapeutic work. On the other hand, it utilises linguistic and literary theory devices to verify these processes. Moreover, it provides concept frames which, in our opinion, are useful in narratively explaining the mechanisms of mental disorders as well as planning therapeutic strategies.

Developing the procedure for isolating a hidden story from a monologue will allow its extensive use in psychological research. We would like to adopt this procedure to check, among other things, if there are connections between the structure and content of a hidden story, and different types of mental disorders. Considering that one monologue can include a few stories which are hidden with varying degrees, it would be worthwhile to examine if they perform different functions in self-regulation. In the interpersonal area it would be interesting to look at relations between different aspects of hidden stories and the quality of close relationship.

Although the proposed procedure lies within the scope of qualitative research, it aspires to aims which are usually attributed to quantitative methods. We think, however, that the role of qualitative methods does not have to be limited to “exploring the area” at the service of quantitative research (see Paluchowski, 2010), especially if studies concern speech-related mental phenomena. Yet, including qualitative methods in the research field requires conducting studies which would verify the reliability and validity of methods adopted to analyse textual material. We hope that these studies will help to construct and verify theoretical models of high heuristic value for psychological practice.

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