STRATEGIES OF IMPLICIT EXPRESSION IN DIALOGIC AND MONOLOGIC DISCOURSE

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Abstract

This study explores the nature and functions of implicit expression in both dialogic and monologic discourse. Implicit meaning — communicated without direct articulation — emerges through pragmatic, cognitive, semiotic, and rhetorical strategies that shape interpretation and influence social and aesthetic effects. Drawing on Grice's theory of conversational implicature, Relevance Theory, and Bakhtin's distinction between dialogism and monologism, the research analyzes how hidden meanings are constructed differently in interactive versus non-interactive discourse. Dialogic discourse generates implicature through turn-taking, negotiation, and speaker interaction, while monologic discourse encodes implicit content through presupposition, subtext, metaphor, and rhetorical design. The study highlights how these theoretical frameworks explain the mechanisms through which implicit communication operates across discourse types.

Keywords: implicit expression, dialogic discourse, monologic discourse, conversational implicature, Grice's maxims, Relevance Theory, Bakhtin, dialogism, cognitive inference, rhetorical strategies

Introduction

Implicit expression — the communication of meaning without overtly stating it — is a central feature of human interaction. In both dialogic (interactive) and monologic (non-interactive) discourse, speakers and writers rely on pragmatic, cognitive, semiotic, and rhetorical strategies to convey subtleties and hidden meanings. These strategies are crucial in shaping interpretation, managing social relations, and creating aesthetic or persuasive effects.

Dialogic discourse involves multiple voices and turn-taking, which creates opportunities for negotiation of meaning, irony, sarcasm, and implicature. Monologic discourse, in contrast, projects a single authoritative voice, relying on rhetorical devices, presupposition, subtext, and metaphor to encode implicit content. This study examines the strategies of implicit expression in both discourse types, comparing their functions and analyzing examples.

Theoretical Background
Conversational Implicature

Paul Grice's theory of conversational implicature posits that speakers adhere to a Cooperative Principle, guided by four maxims: Quantity, Quality, Relation, and Manner (Grice, 1975). Flouting a maxim signal to the listener that there is an additional, hidden meaning. For instance, a sarcastic remark flouts the maxim of Quality, prompting the hearer to infer the speaker's true intent.

Sperber and Wilson (1986/1995) developed Relevance Theory, emphasizing that human cognition is geared toward maximizing cognitive effect with minimal processing effort. Speakers exploit this by encoding meanings that listeners are expected to infer automatically. Relevance Theory explains why indirect statements, irony, or understatements effectively communicate implicit content.

Mikhail Bakhtin (1984) distinguished dialogic discourse, characterized by multiple voices or perspectives (heteroglossia), from monologic discourse, where a single authoritative voice predominates. In dialogic discourse, implicit meaning arises dynamically through interaction, negotiation, and shared knowledge. In monologic discourse, implicit meaning is embedded through rhetorical structure, narrative techniques, or authorial strategy.

Table 1. Key Strategies of Implicit Expression

Strategy	Definition	Example in Dialogic Discourse	Example in Monologic Discourse
Flouting maxims	Violating conversational norms to suggest hidden meaning	"Did you finish the report?" – "Well, my cat needed grooming." (B = report not finished)	"Some people talk about cuts … but I say we must redistribute wisely" (criticizes opponents indirectly)
Presupposition	Background assumptions embedded in an utterance	"Have you stopped arriving late?" (assumes the person was late before)	"The reforms, as everyone knows, are long overdue" (assumes shared recognition of delay)
Subtext	Implicit content inferred from context	"I see you brought your umbrella again…" (may imply criticism of dependency)	In a novel: "The walls whispered secrets of a bygone era" (suggests mystery/history)
Irony/Sarcasm	Saying the opposite of what is meant	"Great job!" when someone failed	"The plan, while perfect in theory, will surely fail in practice"
Metaphor	Implicitly compares or symbolizes	N/A (dialogic metaphors are usually playful or humorous)	"Time is a thief that steals our youth" (monologic, literary)
Dialogic voice	Using multiple voices or perspectives	Natural in conversation	Embedded in narrative through quotations, indirect speech

Example Analyses

1) Scenario: Two colleagues at work:

A: "Did you finish the presentation slides?"

B: "Well, the printer jammed… again."

B flouts the maxim of Relation. The literal response about the printer is irrelevant, but the hearer infers that B has not finished the slides. This implicature is context-dependent and relies on shared knowledge of the printer's unreliability.

2) Scenario: Political speech excerpt:

"Some policymakers claim austerity is necessary, but we must ensure that essential services remain protected."

The speaker uses presupposition ("essential services need protection") and subtext (criticizing unnamed policymakers) to convey implicit critique without direct confrontation. The monologic mode allows the speaker to control the narrative, ensuring that implicit meaning is embedded in the rhetorical structure.

Implicit communication relies on shared knowledge, contextual inference, and cognitive mechanisms:

Schema-based inference: Listeners activate relevant cognitive schemas to interpret meaning. Cultural codes can be followings:

Idioms, metaphors, and references convey meaning implicitly within cultural contexts.

Politeness and face-saving Implicitness can reduce confrontation in dialogic settings.

Aesthetic effect are the essential one. In monologic discourse, implicit meaning enhances literary depth and interpretive richness.

As a semiotic coding we can suisual, linguistic, or paralinguistic cues (intonation, gestures) can carry implicit meaning.

Stylistic choices: Monologic authors often use ellipsis, metaphor, or allusion to embed implicit layers of meaning.

Dialogic dynamics: Interactive discourse uses timing, emphasis, and turn-taking to signal implicit content.

Discussion

Strategies of implicit expression differ in dialogic and monologic contexts:

Dialogic discourse expresses real-time implicatures, flouting, irony, subtext negotiation. Interactional and adaptive.

Monologic discourse demonstrates features like controlled, authorial embedding of meaning through rhetorical, narrative, or stylistic devices.

Both modes exploit cognitive expectations and contextual knowledge to convey information indirectly. Recognizing these strategies is crucial in discourse analysis, translation studies, literary criticism, and sociolinguistics.

Conclusion

Implicit expression is essential in shaping communication and interpretation. Dialogic discourse favors dynamic, interactional strategies like implicature, irony, and subtext, while monologic discourse employs structured, rhetorical strategies such as presupposition, metaphor, and heteroglossia. Understanding these mechanisms allows scholars to analyze how meaning is negotiated, masked, or emphasized in different communicative contexts.

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