

THE SYNTAX OF UNRELIABLE NARRATORS' I-UTTERANCES IN *GONE GIRL* BY G. FLYNN

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Abstract

Unreliable narration research raises the problem of truthful information presented in fiction, which is for the most part made up. However, the truth in the fictional world is what the reader believes to be true. Therefore, deliberate deluding or confusing the reader by an untrustworthy character creates an additional fictional layer consisting of false facts. This represents the contradiction between the imaginary and the fake, the latter being untrue in terms of fiction. The paper examines how the author of the best-selling novel *Gone Girl* realizes her intention of deceiving or misleading the readers on the syntactic level of speech of the two main characters who are unreliable narrators. The analysis of sentence structure variety, average sentence length and syntactic stylistic peculiarities of *I*-utterances aims at ascertaining whether these devices and their frequency indicate that the author gives the readers a hint at the unreliability of the narration. Sentence complexity and types of clauses in composite sentences are also taken into consideration as possible signs of unreliability. As one main character is male and the other is female, the quantitative analysis of syntactic features is carried out separately to detect gender differences.

Keywords: *average sentence length, clause, I-utterance, sentence classifications, stylistic syntax, unreliable narrator.*

INTRODUCTION

Unreliability in narration exists at least on two levels – the level of the author (who creates the fictional world and brings the mendacious characters to life) and the level of the characters themselves (who verbalize the author's aims and either produce false or misleading information or conceal facts). Yet, on the author's part, the intention to delude is always conscious whereas the characters' intentions depend on the author's design. Thus, an author can

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make a narrator lie either deliberately for some personal gain or involuntarily due to personality idiosyncrasies. As M. H. Abrams pointed out,

although such a narrator may be neither stupid, credulous, nor demented, he nevertheless manifests a failure of insight, by viewing and appraising his own motives, and the motives and actions of other characters, through what the reader is intended to recognize as the distorting perspective of the narrator's prejudices and private interests (136).

Similarly, the interpretation and evaluation of unreliability occurs on two levels – the level of the readers, whose task is to restore the balance between the true and the false in the text, and the level of the characters who discover the truth while interacting with each other. Discerning “what is fictionally true” (Zipfel 109) proves more complicated for the reader who already regards fiction as imaginary and by creating fiction within fiction the author manipulates not only the characters, but also the readers who have different terms of reference predetermined by ideological, cultural, social and personal values and norms that are applied to detect deception. “The special problems related to the inference of fictional truth in unreliable narration occur because the states of affairs purported by the text, or some assertions about these states of affairs, cannot (all) be taken at face value” (Zipfel 109). To solve this problem Greta Olson advises the reader to judge the narrator's unreliability on the basis of textual signals, and then move beyond a literal reading of the text and attribute personal qualities of fallibility and trustworthiness to narrators just as they make attributions about individuals in other contexts (Olson 104).

The multilayer nature of unreliability is revealed in the novel *Gone Girl* where Gillian Flynn, the writer, manipulates the readers perception by presenting the alternating viewpoints of two main characters – Nick and Amy Dunne, who are writers themselves, consequently a ‘fiction within fiction’ framework is constructed. This paper attempts to outline the peculiarities of the unreliable narrators' syntax concurrently testing the hypothesis whether their syntax is indicative of deceit. Scarce observations on syntactic markers of unreliability made in previous research mention in complete sentences, exclamations, interjections, hesitations, unmotivated repetition (A. Nünning 55), and ellipses that denote the narrator's high level of emotional involvement (qtd. in D'hoker, Martens 119). On account of insufficient scientific attention to unreliable narrators' syntax, works on verbal deception in human communication have been analysed in order to find evidence of syntactic unreliability.

PREVIOUS RESEARCH

Discovering fictional unreliability seems debatable since the grounds for its establishment are borrowed from the real world and may vary significantly depending on culture, society, gender, age and genre. The overlapping actual world and made-up worlds (no matter how similar they may be) contribute to the relativity of unreliability in fiction, making it context-specific because “what is deemed ‘reliable’ in one context [...] may turn out to be unreliable in another, or even explained outside the sphere of a narrator’s failings” (Yacobi 110).

An unreliable narrator is conventionally understood as “one whose perception, interpretation, and evaluation of the matters he or she narrates do not coincide with the opinions and norms implied by the author, which the author expects the alert reader to share” (Abrams 235). It has been the focus of literary theory since 1961 when the term was coined by W. Booth who “called a narrator reliable when he speaks for or acts in accordance with the norms of the work (which is to say, the implied author’s norms), unreliable when he does not” and combined it with the study of irony and the distance between the implied author and the reader (Booth 158-159). The rhetorical approach later resulted in the elaboration of textual signals of unreliable narrators (Olson 97-98) and classifications of unreliability into fallible and untrustworthy (Olson 101-102), bonding and estranging (Phelan 9), narratorial, focal, expository and combined (Pettersson 109), mimetically unreliable narrations with a narrator and without one (Koppe, Kindt 83, 89). Further on, a combination of rhetorical and cognitive approaches to the analysis of unreliability was suggested by A. Nünning (97-98), for “unreliability cannot be defined simply in terms of the text’s ‘structural or semantic’ aspects; it also involves the ‘conceptual frameworks’ brought to the text by its readers” (Phelan, Rabinowitz 4). Apart from that, existential, functional, generic, perspectival and genetic mechanisms of unreliability judgement were elaborated (Yacobi 110-112). And from the standpoint of pragmatics, unreliable narratives began to be viewed as a violation of the Gricean Cooperative Principle and its maxims of quality and quantity and microlinguistic cues (Heyd 137).

There have even been attempts to look into unreliability of the third person narration (Murphy 67). Recent inquiries into the domain of textual unreliability have resulted in a collection of essays edited by V. Nünning illustrating the expansion of the research across genres into: non-fiction (155), lyric poetry (173), drama (189), film (221), audiovisual narratives on YouTube (245), TV news (273), the US elections (329), law courts (347), patients’ narratives (395), etc.

IDENTIFYING UNRELIABLE NARRATORS IN *GONE GIRL*

The story under analysis is based on the disappearance of a wife – Amy Dunne, which is being investigated by the police whose lead suspect is the husband – Nick Dunne. Amy's reliability is seriously compromised since in an effort to preserve her perfect image she decides to frame her husband for murder by entirely faking her diary entries while Nick is doing his best to allay suspicions and seem less guilty by means of half-truths or concealment of information. By using alternative focalization, the author tries to make the readers take sides – believe one of them and disapprove of or blame the other one until finally they stop trusting either. What does she achieve by misleading the readers and making the narrators tamper with the facts besides convincing the readers that her characters are unreliable? It is obvious that, despite being dishonest, the characters start to arouse the readers' sympathies due to them both being the victims of the artful author.

Based on G. Olson's subdivision of unreliable narrators into fallible and untrustworthy, the characters under discussion definitely belong to the latter type of dispositionally unreliable as their inconsistencies "appear to be caused by ingrained behavioral traits or some current self-interest" (102). However, the case of Amy's unreliability proves more complicated because she seems to be a compulsive liar who cannot but deceive either out of sheer malice or because she is mentally unstable. And this correlates with Olson's definition of fallible narrators who "do not reliably report on narrative events because they are mistaken about their judgments or perceptions or are biased" and whose mistakes are "situationally motivated" (Olson, 101-102), which is confirmed by Nick's characterisation of her at the end of the novel: "Because the woman I cheated on – my wife, Amy Elliott Dunne – is a sociopath and a murderer" (Flynn 390) and emphasized by all those numerous identities she claims to embody throughout the story: Amazing Amy, Diary Amy, Actual Amy, Dead Amy, Ozark Amy, Other Amy, as well as fake names – Lydia and Nancy – that she makes use of.

In addition, the Dunnes' lies belong to different types: Nick's insincerity is deception by omission which presupposes that he "withholds some information from the target" (Galasinski 22) and Amy's trickery is deception by commission or an act of causally contributing to the "target's acquiring or continuing a belief that suits the purposes of the deceiver" (*ibid.*), which means that Nick is a passive deceiver and Amy represents an active one. D. Galasinski asserts that the former does not "distort or falsify reality" (*ibid.*) while the latter offers explicitly or implicitly fabricated information. Nevertheless, omission is generally harder to identify because "the narrator is making no claim; he is only neglecting to include all relevant information" (Fitzpatrick, Bachenko, Fornaciari 59).

Although both narrators are willful liars, only one of them, Nick, repeatedly and explicitly admits to being unfaithful to other characters and to himself:

I'm a big fan of the lie of omission (Flynn 115).
 'I cheated on Amy. I've been cheating on Amy.' (*idem* 194)
 Let me say it right now: I cheated (*idem* 334).
 I am a cheating, weak-spined, woman-fearing coward, and I am the hero of your story (*idem* 390).

Amy, on the other hand, only gives hints that allow the reader to suspect pretence:

I want the house to tell a story of conflict between true and false (Flynn 199).
 Not Diary Amy, who is a work of fiction (and Nick said I wasn't really a writer, and why did I ever listen to him?), but me, Actual Amy (*idem* 200).

Their unreliability is further intensified by the author who, in her turn, constantly exposes the characters by making them assume the roles of liars more than once. Nonetheless, they mostly admit to minor commonplace lies:

'I have no idea,' I lied (Flynn 64) [Nick is saying this to detective Jim Gilpin].
 'I don't have it with me,' I lied (*idem* 68) [Nick deceives his mother-in-law].
 'I can just barely,' I lie (*idem* 244) [Amy is talking about swimming].
 'Reading,' I lie (*idem* 265) [Amy is lying about her occupation].

At the same time, Amy and Nick catch each other lying or criticise each other for cheating, which urges the readers to feel sorry for them and to some extent justify their amoral behaviour:

Nick is cheating, I thought dumbly, and before I could make myself say anything, they were going up to her apartment (Flynn 213).
 I've listened to his lies, lies, lies – from simplistic child's fibs to elaborate Rube Goldbergian contraptions (*idem* 215).
 I was thinking about all of Amy's lies and whether the pregnancy was one of them (*idem* 275).

Besides, both narrators confess to being fooled by each other stirring the compassion of more sensitive readers. Amy mentions: "He would see me across the breakfast table, innocently slurping cereal, and know that I am a fool, and how can anyone respect a fool?" (Flynn 59), "I've suffered betrayal with all five senses" (*idem* 215), and Nick expresses his surprise in: "That I

could be that fooled” (Flynn 383). All of the above undoubtedly reinforces the readers’ assurance that both characters appear to be inaccurate in their narratives though their motives and methods are dissimilar.

DECEPTIVE SYNTAX

Having perused the available results of verbal deception research I singled out the distinctive features of syntax observed by different scholars. In *Automatic Detection of Verbal Deception*, E. Fitzpatrick, J. Bachenko and T. Fornaciari accumulated the data of a great number of inquiries including one by B. M. dePaulo *et al.* who assert that 1) deceptive messages should be shorter than truthful ones (qtd. in Fitzpatrick, Bachenko, Fornaciari 22); 2) liars appear generally less immediate than truth-tellers, employing more linguistic expressions which put a distance between themselves and the interlocutors as well as the content of their statements, namely the passive rather than the active voice, and negations rather than assertions (*idem* 23); 3) liars seem to be more uncertain than truth-tellers (*idem* 23); 4) interruptions and changes in the sentences, stutters, omission of words, and slips of tongue are regarded as a symptom of anxiety (*idem* 23) caused by insincerity; 5) the repetition of words and phrases is a significant cue to deception (*idem* 24) as the task of lying implies an absorption of cognitive resources, which has the peculiar effect of making the language more stereotyped; 6) spontaneous corrections are less frequent in deceptive stories (*idem* 25). D. Shaw *et al.* claim that liars use the connective ‘before that’ less often than truth tellers, however, there is no difference for the ‘and then’ connective (qtd. in Fitzpatrick, Bachenko, Fornaciari 32), and S. Adams ascertained that deceptive narratives have a longer beginning (qtd. in Fitzpatrick, Bachenko, Fornaciari 33).

J.T. Hancock, L.E. Curry, S. Goorha and M. Woodworth came to the following conclusions: 1) liars use more words during deceptive conversations (12) (which challenges the first assertion in the list above); 2) more questions were observed during deceptive communication (13); 3) motivated liars used reliably fewer causation terms (*e.g.*, “because,” “hence”) (15).

Attempts to study the deep syntax of deceptive texts resulted in the assumption that “the closer the nodes in the sentence tree the higher the likelihood that a particular subject-predicate-object statement is true” (Conroy, Rubin, Chen 3), and deceptive product reviewers use VP, SBAR (clause introduced by subordinating conjunction), and WHADV (clauses introduced by the conjunction ‘when’) more frequently than truthful reviewers (Feng, Banerjee, Choi 174).

Taking into account all the afore-mentioned findings the syntax of the unreliable narrators' will be examined according to such criteria as: 1. Length of the sentence; 2. Complexity of the sentence; 3. Signs of immediacy: first-person reference, negative utterances and passive voice structures; 4. Stylistic peculiarities of utterance to prove or disprove the relevance of the previous discoveries to the unreliable narration under consideration.

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

The database consists of 4691 *I*-utterances/ sentences containing first-person-singular references singled out from the novel *Gone Girl* by G. Flynn. *I*-utterances have been chosen as the material of the research because "self-references have been found to appear much less frequently in deceptive narratives than in truthful ones" (Fitzpatrick, Bachenko, Tommaso 4), so their high or low frequency can be indicative of deception.

Since there are two unreliable narrators, syntactic peculiarities of their *I*-utterances were analysed separately. Nick's discourse comprises 9538 sentences, 2941 (30.8%) out of which include *I*-references; Amy has produced 2321 sentences, 1750 (75.4%) out of which have *I*-references. The number of *I*-utterances in Amy's twisted narrative seems to contradict the opinions substantiated in prior research that fewer first-person singular pronouns are observed when people are lying (Hancock *et al.* 14) for deceivers employ strategies to dissociate themselves from their message (Galasinski 28). Such discrepancy may be attributed to the author's particular intention of putting all the blame on Nick.

The frequency of negative sentences and passive structures, which together with the first-person references determine the degree of immediacy, is higher in Amy's discourse (21.3% and 2.4% respectively) than in Nick's (12.6% and 1.9% respectively), testifying to the fact that Amy is inclined to use almost twice as many negative *I*-utterances in comparison with Nick.

Average sentence length (ASL) has been calculated by means of the following formula: total number of words divided by total number of sentences, which yielded the following results: Nick's *I*-utterances ASL is 14.5 words, Amy's – 16,7. Qin, Burgoon, Blair, Nunamaker propose a sample decision tree baseline to differentiate between deception and truth: "If the ASL of a message is greater than 15.75, it is most likely that the message is true; if ASL is less than 15.75, it is more likely to be a deceptive message; otherwise it is most likely to be true" (1). The results of my calculation once again prove that there's a slightly greater probability of Nick's *I*-utterances being deceptive according to their average length, while Amy's *I*-utterances are longer than 15.75 words, hence they are likely to be

true, which is not the case in the novel. To verify the baseline, I decided to calculate the ASL of all the sentences, not only *I*-utterances, and found out that the ASL of Nick's and Amy's discourses is 12 and 14.3 respectively, which confirms Qin et al.'s assertion about deceptive messages.

The concept of syntactic complexity refers to "a variety of quantitative measurements regarding the grammatical structure of a sentence. Measures of syntactic complexity can identify how difficult any given sentence is to comprehend, as well as how hard a sentence is to produce; in both of these cases, higher complexity indicates greater difficulty" (Boisclair 2).

Measures of syntactic complexity can be divided into three main categories:

1. Length-based: concerned with the number of words or clauses in a sentence.
2. Comprehension-based dealing with the depth of embedding in a phrase-structure tree and designed to predict the level of difficulty that a listener or reader would have in processing a sentence.
3. Production-based tracing the appearance of certain categories of syntactic structure – *e.g.*, subordinate clauses, objects of verbs, and conjunctions, in view of the peculiarities of language acquisition (*idem* 5).

The developmental scale of language acquisition, initiated to rate sentence complexity, encompasses 6 levels: starting from simple sentence at level 0 through non-finite clauses as objects without overt subjects, coordinated structures, finite clauses as objects (and equivalents), non-finite clauses as objects with overt subjects (and equivalents), finite or non-finite adjunct clauses, complex subjects, representing levels 1-6, to level 7 which comprises more than one structure from levels 1-6 (Covington *et al.* 11).

Analysing the syntactic complexity of *I*-utterances in this paper involves identifying and counting the occurrences and correlation of the following: 1. Simple, compound, complex and compound-complex sentences; 2. Clauses within sentences; 3. Types of coordinate and subordinate clauses.

Table 1 Structural types of sentences

Type of sentence	Nick's <i>I</i> -utterances	Amy's <i>I</i> -utterances		
Simple	857	29.1%	491	28%
Compound	623	21.2%	268	15.4%
Complex	936	31.8%	493	28.2%
Compound-complex	525	17.9%	498	28.4%
Total	2941	100%	1750	100%

The structural analysis of Nick and Amy Dunnes' *I*-utterances represented in Table 1 demonstrates that simple sentences, containing only one clause, constitute less than 30% in both narrators' discourses. Taken together, sentences with multiple clauses constitute slightly more than 70% of the characters' *I*-utterances, their subtypes, however, present a rather different picture. It is noticeable that Amy tends to use about 4% fewer complex sentences and nearly 6% fewer compound sentences, in contrast, Nick uses 10.5% fewer compound-complex sentences. According to D-scale coordinate connection (level 3), which is characteristic of compound sentences, is less difficult than complex sentences with subordinate connection that belongs to level 5, and compound-complex sentences obviously belong to level 7, as they combine the two aforementioned types of connection within one sentence. Therefore, Amy's *I*-utterances turn out to be more complicated than Nick's in their structure. J. R. Schafer declares that "complex sentence and compound-complex sentence patterns allow for gross distortions in temporal-spatial lacunae" (44) that create text bridges where information can be intentionally hidden (*idem* 49), thus evidencing Amy's greater degree of untrustworthiness.

Another aspect of sentence complexity that has been considered is the number of clauses within compound, complex and compound-complex sentences. It has been determined that multiple clauses within one sentence range from 2 to 12 in Nick's *I*-utterances and from 2 to 17 in Amy's *I*-utterances.

Table 2 Types of sentences according to the number of clauses

# of clauses	Type of sentence															
	Nick's <i>I</i> -utterances								Amy's <i>I</i> -utterances							
	Simple		Compound		Complex		Compound-complex		Simple		Compound		Complex		Compound-complex	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
1	857	100	-	-	-	-	-	-	491	100	-	-	-	-	-	-
2	-	-	457	73.4	638	68.2	-	-	-	-	174	64.9	332	67.3	-	-
3	-	-	142	22.8	219	23.4	243	46.3	-	-	59	22	127	25.8	167	33.5
4	-	-	9	1.4	44	4.7	126	24	-	-	19	7.1	25	5.1	114	22.9
5	-	-	8	1.3	26	2.8	74	14.1	-	-	12	4.5	4	0.8	85	17.1
6&>	-	-	7	1.1	9	0.9	82	15.6	-	-	4	1.5	5	1	132	26.5
Total	857	100	623	100	936	100	525	100	491	100	268	100	493	100	498	100

As can be seen in table 2, Amy Dunne uses 8.5% fewer compound sentences consisting of just 2 clauses, but nearly 9.3% more compound sentences with more than 3 clauses. So, in spite of the fact that she normally uses fewer compound sentences than Nick, her compound sentences tend to contain more clauses. The percentage of complex sentences usage does not reveal any substantial variations in the narrators' syntax; the percentage of

compound-complex sentences, on the contrary, attests to Amy's marked predisposition to sentences with greater number of clauses (5 and more).

Having counted all the clauses in the characters' sentences (6831 in Nick's and 4219 in Amy's), I established the correlation between sentences and clauses in their syntax: Nick uses 2.3 clauses per sentence whereas Amy uses 2.7 clauses per sentence, which indicates a slightly greater complexity of Amy's sentences. Additionally, having calculated the percentage of utterances which consist of more than 10 clauses in both narrators' *I*-utterances, I discovered that in Amy's discourse they amount to 6.1% while in Nick's discourse the percentage is only 1.7%.

The next step is to compare the number and types of independent and dependent clauses with *I*-references. Nick's *I*-utterances include 3744 clauses with *I*-references (2838 independent and 906 dependent clauses) and Amy's *I*-utterances contain 2439 clauses with *I*-references (1932 independent and 507 dependent ones). This means that dependent clauses with *I*-references constitute 24.2% in Nick's *I*-utterances, and 20.8% in Amy's utterances, which reinforces Nick's tendency to use 3.4% more self-reference in dependent clauses, and Amy's 3.4% greater usage of self-reference in independent clauses. This shows Nick's proclivity to disclose information that adds to and relies on the details of the main clause. Another distinctive feature is the number of independent clauses connected syndetically and asyndetically illustrated in table 3.

Table 3 Types of connection in independent clauses

Type of connection		Nick's <i>I</i> -utterances		Amy's <i>I</i> -utterances	
		#	%	#	%
Syndetic	copulative	175	6.2	174	9
	adversative	90	3.2	94	4.9
	disjunctive	2	0.1	3	0.2
Asyndetic		2571	90.5	1661	85.9
Total		2838	100	1932	100

Syndetic connection, *i.e.* copulative coordination (with dominating copulative conjunction 'and' for both narrators), contrastive coordination (by means of conjunction 'but' and 'yet') and disjunctive coordination (conjunction 'or'), which is almost non-existent, is more typical of Amy's *I*-utterances. Copulative conjunctions are almost twice as frequent as the other two types of connection. J. R. Schafer claims that the conjunction 'and' creates "temporal-spatial lacunae to some degree because the conjunction carries the implied 'and then'" (44), suggesting the possibility of deception. Predominance of asyndetic connection in both narrators' discourses can produce the effect of the speaker being in a hurry while recounting the story

with Nick being more so, judging by the percentage in table 3. Such haste may also mislead or confuse the reader who is already struggling with what is true or false in the narrative.

Using subordinate clauses that, as J. R. Schafer puts it, “create temporal-spatial lacunae”, liars can secrete or withhold information (45). Analysis of the types of subordinate clauses has revealed that relative clauses that provide additional data about somebody or something dominate among both narrators' dependent *I*-clauses (61.4% in Nick's and 42.2% in Amy's), being more pervasive in Nick's case, again proving that he seems to feel obliged to supply as many details as possible to justify himself. Time clauses are the second in occurrence (18.4% in Nick's *I*-utterances and 25% in Amy's), most of them being introduced by the conjunction ‘when’ that according to T. L. Suiter's research was prevalent in deceptive statements, signaling a temporal lacuna (qtd. in Schafer 39) that implies unreliability. Clauses of reason have third relative frequency in both narrators' *I*-utterances (11.8% in Nick's and 19.9% in Amy's), and their number points to the characters' efforts to explain the causes of their actions or words, endeavouring either to clear themselves of suspicion or to encourage the readers' compassion. This finding questions Hancock's *et al.*'s assumption about fewer causation terms in deceptive communication. Other types of subordinate clauses (clauses of manner, concession, result and purpose) do not show significant differences in their usage ranging from 1 to 2%, except conditional clauses (1.4% in Nick's *I*-utterances and 6.7% in Amy's), which may suggest the greater uncertainty of Amy's discourse.

Another indicator of uncertainty is a stylistic device of aposiopesis used when the speaker cannot continue talking due to “his feelings depriving him of the ability to express himself in terms of language” (Galperin 33-34). In the context of *Gone Girl*, it may denote anxiety caused by the fear of being caught lying or unwillingness to disclose too much. Unlike conditional clauses, this device is more frequently used in Nick's *I*-utterances (137 times), than in Amy's (44 times). It is represented by false starts: “I – My wife is missing” (Flynn 44); longer pauses within utterances: “I'm a man with a missing wife and a secret... girlfriend” (132), or unfinished sentences: ““Amy would die—’ I caught myself” (64). With regard to spontaneous correction, which deceptive stories are said to lack, aposiopesis was used only 12 times in Nick's *I*-utterances and merely 3 times in Amy's, corroborating its infrequency.

Concerning other stylistic peculiarities of the Dunnes' *I*-utterances, it should be mentioned that along with quite frequent occurrence of repetition, ellipsis, enumeration and inversion (particularly of adverbial modifiers), detached constructions stand out as a stylistic peculiarity of both narrators' syntax. Detached parts of the sentence are placed so that they seem formally

independent of the word they logically refer to (Galperin 205-206). They have two major effects, first, they make the readers take pains to interpret the message and get distracted, second, they make some information more prominent in the sentence. The author marks detachment by means of punctuation (commas, colons or dashes) and in such a way separates a single word, a phrase or a whole sentence: "I respect rules, because if you follow rules, things go smoothly, usually" (Flynn 46). "I array myself in Desi's favorite look: delicate flower" (*idem* 347). "I tried to make it sound self-effacing – yet another thing I'm not good at – but the detectives weren't biting" (*idem* 163). In the next example one detached word is placed within parenthesis and its effect is intensified by a question mark: "I don't (didn't?) like cheaters: dishonest, disrespectful, petty, spoiled" (*idem* 126). Besides, there is another example of detachment in this sentence – adjectives used in post-position to the noun they refer to, such location of enumerated qualities combined asyndetically make the reader pay more attention to them. Detached constructions often perform the explanatory function: "I felt awful, my stomach greasy, my psyche crackling" (*idem* 118).

One more noticeable stylistic feature is Amy's inclination to use polysyndeton more, which "causes each member of a string of facts to stand out conspicuously" (Galperin 227): "I kicked him and got away for a second and ran to the kitchen, and we struggled more and he clubbed me once with the big wooden Judy handle, and I went flying and then he hit me two or three more times" (Flynn 357), and Nick's predilection to asyndeton: "I was embarrassed, I snarled at her, she snapped at me, and ... the usual" (*idem* 115), which signifies his tendency towards language economy that may imply his keeping something back.

CONCLUSIONS

The present study has investigated whether there are syntactic markers of deception in unreliable narrators' *I*-utterances on the material of G. Flynn's novel *Gone Girl*. As both narrators are conscious liars but one of them (the female) deceives by commission and the other one (the male) – by omission, this will be taken into consideration in the brief summary.

The analysis of the linguistic immediacy of the utterance, average sentence length and sentence complexity has demonstrated that deception by omission is marked by fewer first-person references, greater ASL, and predominance of subordinate relative clauses supplying additional information. Such tendencies in male *I*-utterances can be explained by Nick's craving to avoid being caught lying, so he rambles on imparting irrelevant details at the same time hiding the most important ones.

Deception by commission is characterized by a higher frequency of negative utterances, shorter ASL and greater sentence complexity in terms of the number of clauses within one composite sentence and higher frequency of subordinate clauses of condition. Amy knows exactly what she wants to achieve by pretending to be sincere and makes the impression of speaking strictly to the point in contrast to her husband who she is taking revenge on. Another explanation for such correlations could be that Amy's purpose is to focus all the readers' attention on herself; Nick, however, aspires to get away from too close a scrutiny of his personality and actions.

Prevalence of composite sentences in both narrators' I-utterances contradicts the statement that liars tend to use fewer words (qtd. in Fitzpatrick, Bachenko, Fornaciari; Hancock *et al.* 15). It is also worth mentioning that Amy's I-utterances prove to be more complex structurally than Nick's. This may mean that readability reduced by using more complicated syntactic structures prevents the readers from detecting the deceivers too easily while they are trying to process and remember all the significant or the trivial and the truthful or the fabricated incorporated in one sentence.

Stylistic peculiarities of deceptive syntax include bigger number of aposiopeses in deception by omission. The asyndeton has turned out to be a stylistic device characteristic of the deception by omission in an attempt to conceal something specific whereas the polysyndeton is more typical of deception by commission allowing the narrator to create text bridges or temporal-spatial lacunae to keep something secret (*cf.* Schafer 49). Another distinctive feature of both types of deception with regard to stylistic syntax is the use of detached constructions which may either distract the reader from what is being said or make him pay attention to certain details that are not necessarily true.

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