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Oksana I. Hrom
Senior Lecturer,
Department of Germanic Languages
and Intercultural Communication,
Dragomanov Ukrainian State University,
Kyiv, Ukraine
https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2238-2831
e-mail: o.i.hrom@udu.edu.ua

REFLECTIONS OF CONCEPT ‘MENTAL ACTIVITY’ IN THE 21ST-CENTURY ENGLISH LITERTURE FROM INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

This paper explores intercultural communication through the lens of the ‘MENTAL ACTIVITY’ concept in 21st-century English literature. The study addresses the problem how mental processes – such as thinking, perception, memory, and interpretation – linguistically represent and culturally mediate in contemporary literary discourse. The aim of the research is to provide an integrative analysis of the concept of mental activity by examining its linguistic, cognitive, and intercultural dimensions. The theoretical framework combines principles of cognitive linguistics, discourse analysis, and cognitive poetics. The empirical material consists of selected English-language literary texts that reflect diverse cultural perspectives and narrative strategies.

The findings demonstrate that the following units form mental activity by means of a complex system of lexical, grammatical, and stylistic means, including verbs of cognition, metaphorical expressions, and narrative techniques such as focalization and free indirect dis-course. Metaphorical conceptualization plays a key role in structuring cognitive experience, while implicitness and interpretative openness require active reader engagement. The study also reveals that intercultural factors significantly influence both the representation and interpretation of mental activity, leading to hybrid cognitive models in contemporary literature.

The results contribute to the development of an interdisciplinary approach to literary analysis and enhance the understanding of how language, thought, and culture interact in modern literary communication. The study has theoretical significance for linguistics and literary studies, as well as practical relevance for translation and intercultural communication.

Keywords: *mental activity, intercultural communication, cognitive linguistics, metaphor, literary discourse, cognitive poetics.*

1. Introduction.

In contemporary linguistic and literary studies, they pay increasing attention to the intersection of language, cognition, and culture, particularly within the framework of intercultural communication. The growing complexity of global interactions has intensified scholarly interest in how conceptual structures are constructed, represented, and interpreted across cultural boundaries. One of the key conceptual domains that has attracted sustained attention is that of "mental activity", which encompasses processes such as thinking, perception, memory, and interpretation. In 21st-century English literature, this concept is not only thematically prominent but also linguistically and discursively elaborated in ways that reflect broader intercultural dynamics.

The relevance of this study lies in the need to explore how literary discourse mediates the representation of mental activity in a globalized cultural context. Contemporary English-language fiction increasingly incorporates diverse cultural perspectives, multilingual elements, and hybrid narrative strategies, which together contribute to the reconfiguration of traditional cognitive and communicative models. As a result, the concept of mental activity becomes a site of intercultural negotiation, where different ways of perceiving and structuring reality are brought into interaction (Evans, 2019).

Despite the growing body of research on conceptual metaphor, cognitive linguistics, and intercultural communication, the relationship between the linguistic representation of mental activity and its intercultural dimensions in modern English literature remains insufficiently explored. Existing studies tend to focus on cognitive models either in isolation or on intercultural communication in non-literary contexts, leaving a gap in understanding how these domains intersect within literary discourse. This creates a need for an integrative approach that combines insights from cognitive linguistics, discourse analysis, and literary studies.

The problem addressed in this article concerns the lack of a comprehensive framework for analysing how the concept of mental activity is constructed and communicated in 21st-century English literature within an intercultural perspective. In particular, it remains unclear how linguistic choices, narrative techniques, and cultural references interact to shape the reader's interpretation of cognitive processes. Furthermore, scientists have not sufficiently theorized the role of intercultural factors in influencing the representation and reception of mental activity.

The practical significance of this research lies in its potential to enhance the understanding of intercultural meaning making in literary texts, as well as to contribute to translation studies, literary interpretation, and cross-cultural communication. By identifying the linguistic and conceptual mechanisms through which mental activity is represented, the study may also support more effective interpretation of culturally diverse narratives (Hua, 2019).

The contribution of this article consists in developing an integrative analytical

perspective on mental activity concept as we realize it in contemporary English literary discourse. The study aims to bridge the gap between cognitive and intercultural approaches by examining how mental processes are linguistically encoded and culturally framed. In doing so, it seeks to provide new insights into the interaction between language, thought, and culture in the context of modern literary communication.

2. Literature Review.

The study of intercultural communication and conceptual representation in language has become a central concern in contemporary linguistics, particularly within the domains of cognitive linguistics, discourse analysis, and literary studies. The concept of 'MENTAL ACTIVITY' occupies a key position in this research paradigm, as it reflects fundamental processes of human cognition and their linguistic manifestation. However, the integration of this concept into the analysis of 21st-century English literature within an intercultural framework remains an emerging and insufficiently systematized field of inquiry.

Cognitive linguistics provides a significant theoretical foundation for the mental activity analysis, particularly George Lakoff and Mark Johnson's works, who introduced the theory of conceptual metaphor. According to this framework, abstract domains such as thinking and understanding are structured by means of metaphorical mappings grounded in bodily experience. Expressions like "grasping an idea" or "losing a thought" illustrate how we conceptualize mental activity through spatial and physical schemas. These insights are crucial for analysing how literary texts encode cognitive processes in culturally meaningful ways (Lakoff, 2016).

Further development of cognitive approaches we can found in the theory of mental spaces and conceptual blending proposed by Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner. Their work emphasizes the dynamic and creative nature of meaning construction, particularly in complex discourse such as literature. Conceptual blending allows for the integration of multiple cognitive frames, which is especially relevant in intercultural contexts where different cultural models interact within a single narrative (Turner, 2023).

We can also find out the explored linguistic representation of mental activity in the framework of cognitive grammar, notably in Ronald Langacke's works. His approach highlights the role of conceptualization in shaping grammatical structures, suggesting that linguistic expressions of mental processes reflect underlying cognitive operations. This perspective provides a useful basis for examining how narrative voice, perspective, and focalization contribute to the representation of mental activity in literary discourse.

From the standpoint of discourse analysis, the contributions of Teun A. van Dijk are particularly relevant. His cognitive-discursive model emphasizes the interaction between textual structures, mental models, and social context. This approach enables the analysis of how readers interpret representations of mental activity based on both linguistic cues and culturally shared knowledge. In literary

texts, such interpretations are often shaped by implicit assumptions and contextual frames that vary across cultures (Li, 2026).

The works of Edward T. Hall and Geert Hofstede have significantly influenced on the intercultural communication as a sphere of study. Their theories of cultural dimensions and communication styles provide essential tools for understanding how they negotiate the meaning across cultural boundaries. In the context of literature, these insights help explain how culturally specific representations of mental activity may be interpreted differently by diverse audiences.

More research that is recent has focused on the intersection of cognitive linguistics and literary studies, often referred to as cognitive poetics. Scholars in this field examine how readers mentally construct narrative worlds and interpret characters' thoughts and emotions. "Mind style" concept which refers to the distinctive linguistic representation of a character's cognitive perspective, has proven particularly useful for analysing how the writers encode mental activity in literary texts. This line of inquiry underscores the importance of linguistic choices in shaping readers' access to fictional minds (Żuromski, 2026).

At the same time, contemporary studies emphasize the role of globalization and cultural hybridity in shaping modern English literature. The increasing presence of transnational narratives and multilingual elements reflects a shift toward more complex forms of intercultural communication. In such contexts, the representation of mental activity often involves the interaction of multiple cultural frameworks, leading to hybrid conceptualizations that challenge traditional cognitive models.

In recent years, these theoretical approaches have been further developed within contemporary cognitive and intercultural studies.

Recent research in cognitive linguistics and intercultural pragmatics has considerably expanded the understanding of how mental activity is represented through language and discourse. Contemporary scholars increasingly emphasize that cognitive processes are not universal and isolated phenomena but are shaped by cultural, emotional, and communicative contexts. "The Oxford English Dictionary" (2023) illustrates hierarchical structure of this semantic field, in which superordinate terms like "think" serving as definitional primitives for more concrete concepts [OED, 2023].

The intercultural dimension of conceptual representation has also received significant scholarly attention in recent years. K. Senkbeil investigates idiomatic language from cognitive and pragmatic perspectives and demonstrates that intercultural communication depends on culturally specific conceptual models. Such findings are important for the analysis of 21st-century English literature, where multilingualism, transnational identities, and hybrid cultural experiences shape the representation of consciousness and mental activity (Senkbeil, 2020).

Modern interdisciplinary scholarship also highlights the role of embodiment and affect in communication. Charalambous, Zembylas, and Aristidou argue that intercultural communication extends beyond verbal language and includes

emotional, sensory, and bodily experiences. Such an approach broadens the interpretation of literary cognition because fictional narratives frequently represent thought processes through gestures, physical sensations, and emotional reactions. Similarly, Cienki (2022) emphasizes the connection between gesture, cognition, and multimodal meaning construction, demonstrating that mental activity may be expressed through both verbal and non-verbal semiotic resources (Charalambous, Zembylas, and Aristidou, 2025).

The theory of conceptual metaphor continues to play an important role in contemporary cognitive literary studies. Z. Kövecses develops the extended conceptual metaphor theory and demonstrates that metaphorical thinking operates within complex contextual and cultural frameworks. His approach allows researchers to analyse how literary texts encode culturally specific models of perception, reasoning, and emotional experience (Kövecses, 2020).

In a similar way, A. Musolff examines metaphorical scenarios in political and public discourse, showing that conceptual metaphors shape collective patterns of interpretation and cognition (Musolff, 2021).

Recent studies in intercultural pragmatics also contribute to the understanding of literary communication. H.-G. Wolf stresses that communication processes are deeply connected with cognitive and cultural expectations shared by discourse participants. This theoretical perspective is especially relevant for contemporary English literature, where intercultural encounters often influence narrative voice, perspective, and the representation of fictional consciousness (Wolf, 2021).

Another important tendency in recent scholarship concerns the interaction between cognition and translation processes. Carl (2025) explores representationalism and enactivism in cognitive translation studies and argues that meaning construction is an active interpretative process shaped by linguistic and cultural experience. Similarly, Tannenbaum and Har demonstrate that language choice significantly influences emotional and cognitive perception. Their findings support the idea that representations of mental activity in literary discourse are strongly connected with linguistic and cultural context (Tannenbaum & Har, 2020).

These contemporary approaches substantially broaden the theoretical framework of cognitive poetics and intercultural literary studies. They confirm that the concept of mental activity in 21st-century English literature should be analysed through the interaction of cognitive, metaphorical, emotional, discursive, and intercultural dimensions. At the same time, the growing interdisciplinarity of recent studies demonstrates the necessity of integrating cognitive linguistics, discourse analysis, pragmatics, and intercultural communication theory into the analysis of contemporary literary texts.

Despite these advances, several gaps remain in the existing literature. First, a lack of integrative studies that combine cognitive, discursive, and intercultural perspectives in the analysis of mental activity's literary representations. Second, scientists have not paid insufficient attention to the specific features of the 21st-century English literature, which they characterize by the new narrative techniques

and increased cultural diversity. Third, they have not fully theorized the dynamic relationship between linguistic form, conceptual structure, and cultural context in relation to mental activity. The theoretical and methodological basis of the present study draws on cognitive linguistics, discourse analysis, and intercultural communication theory. By synthesizing these approaches, the research aims to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how the concept of mental activity is constructed and communicated in contemporary English literary discourse.

3. Aim and Objectives.

The aim of this article is to investigate the representation of the 'MENTAL ACTIVITY' concept in 21st-century English literature from the perspective of intercultural communication, with a focus on the linguistic, cognitive, and discursive mechanisms that shape its construction and interpretation.

To achieve this aim, the following objectives we define:

– to determine the theoretical status of the 'MENTAL ACTIVITY' concept within the frameworks of cognitive linguistics and literary discourse analysis;

– to identify the key linguistic means used to represent mental activity in contemporary English literary texts, including lexical, grammatical, and stylistic devices;

– to analyse the cognitive structures underlying the conceptualization of mental activity, with particular attention to metaphor, mental spaces, and narrative perspective;

– to examine the role of discourse strategies in shaping the representation of characters' mental processes, including focalization, narrative voice, and mind style;

– to explore the intercultural dimension of mental activity representation, focusing on how cultural frameworks influence both the encoding and interpretation of cognitive processes in literary discourse.

4. Methodology.

This study employs a qualitative, interdisciplinary research design aimed at analysing the representation of the 'MENTAL ACTIVITY' concept in 21st-century English literature within an intercultural framework. The methodological approach integrates principles from cognitive linguistics, discourse analysis, and cognitive poetics, enabling a comprehensive examination of linguistic, conceptual, and cultural dimensions of literary discourse.

The empirical material consists of a purposively selected corpus of contemporary English-language literary texts, including novels and short stories published in the 21st century. The selection criteria include thematic relevance to the representation of mental processes, diversity of cultural contexts, and the presence of narrative techniques that foreground characters' inner experiences. The corpus reflects a range of authors and stylistic approaches, ensuring representativeness of current literary trends and intercultural perspectives.

The research follows a multi-stage analytical procedure. First, we examine the selected texts to identify instances of linguistic representation of mental activity, including explicit and implicit references to cognitive processes. Second, we categorize these instances according to their linguistic form and conceptual function. Third, we are analyse the identified patterns in relation to narrative structure and discourse strategies, with particular attention to the interaction between language and perspectives. Finally, we interpret the findings within an intercultural framework, considering the influence of cultural context on the meaning construction. Methodological triangulations ensure the validity of the study by means of combining multiple analytical approaches to provide a more comprehensive interpretation of the data. The use of authentic literary texts enhances the ecological validity of the findings. However, the qualitative nature of the research entails a degree of interpretative subjectivity. Additionally, the focus on English-language literature may limit the generalizability of the results to other linguistic traditions. Future research may address these limitations by incorporating comparative and quantitative methods.

5. Results.

The analysis of the selected corpus demonstrates that 'MENTAL ACTIVITY' concept in the 21st-century English literature is constructed through a complex interaction of linguistic, cognitive, and intercultural mechanisms. Contemporary literary texts do not merely depict mental processes but actively shape their interpretation by means of specific discourse strategies, narrative techniques, and culturally embedded conceptualizations.

1. The Linguistic Representation of Mental Activity.

The findings indicate that scientists consistently encode mental activity through a wide range of lexical and grammatical resources. Verbs of cognition (to think, to realize, to remember, to imagine), perception (to see, to notice, to feel), and evaluation (to believe, to assume, to doubt) serve as primary markers of mental processes. However, their usage often extends beyond literal reference, acquiring context-dependent meanings shaped by narrative perspective (Lugea, 2022).

In addition to verbal forms, nominalizations such as thought, memory, perception, and awareness contribute to the objectification of mental processes, presenting them as entities within the narrative world. This linguistic strategy enables the reification of cognition, allowing mental activity to function as a thematic and structural element of the text.

2. Metaphorical Conceptualization.

A key finding of the study is the pervasive use of metaphor in structuring the concept of mental activity. Literary texts frequently conceptualize cognition in terms of spatial, physical, and sensory domains. Common patterns include:

Mental activity as movement (e.g., thoughts "drift," "wander," or "return");

Mental activity as vision (e.g., ideas are "clear," "blurred," or "hidden");

Mental activity as possession (e.g., one "has" or "loses" a thought).

These metaphorical mappings reflect embodied cognitive schemas while also

being shaped by cultural conventions. In intercultural contexts, variations in metaphor usage reveal differing conceptualizations of cognition, highlighting the role of cultural background in meaning construction (Pager-McClymont et al., 2026).

3. Narrative Perspective and Mind Representation.

The analysis shows that narrative techniques play a crucial role in representing mental activity. Devices such as internal focalization, free indirect discourse, and stream-of-consciousness narration provide access to characters' inner worlds. These techniques allow the reader to experience mental processes as dynamic and often fragmented.

The concept of mind style is particularly relevant in this context. Individual characters are associated with distinct linguistic patterns that reflect their cognitive and cultural perspectives. For instance, variations in syntactic complexity, lexical choice, and metaphor usage signal differences in perception, reasoning, and emotional processing (Qu, 2025).

4. Implicitness and Interpretative Engagement.

A notable feature of contemporary literary discourse is the implicit representation of mental activity. Rather than explicitly describing cognitive processes, authors often rely on indirect cues, such as symbolic imagery, narrative gaps, and contextual inference. This strategy requires active reader participation in constructing meaning.

Implicitness is especially significant in intercultural texts, where we cannot take the shared assumptions for granted. As a result, the representation of mental activity becomes a site of interpretative negotiation, where readers draw on their own cultural and cognitive frameworks to make sense of the text.

5. The Intercultural Dimensions of Mental Activity.

The findings highlight that intercultural factors deeply influence the mental activity representation. In the texts that incorporate diverse cultural perspectives, some scientists often frame cognitive processes through culturally specific concepts, values, and communicative norms. This results in hybrid representations that combine elements from multiple cultural systems.

For example, differences in the expression of emotions, memory, and self-reflection reflect broader cultural distinctions in the understanding of the mind. Some texts emphasize introspection and individual cognition, while others foreground relational or collective dimensions of mental activity. These variations demonstrate that cognition is not a purely universal phenomenon, but the cultural context mediates it.6. Hybridization and Narrative Innovation.

Contemporary English literature increasingly employs hybrid narrative forms that challenge traditional representations of mental activity. Multilingual elements, fragmented structures, and non-linear narratives contribute to a more fluid and dynamic depiction of cognition. These innovations reflect the influence of globalization and the blending of cultural identities.

Such hybridization also affects the linguistic encoding of mental processes, leading to the coexistence of different conceptual models within a single text. This

creates a layered representation of mental activity, where multiple perspectives interact and sometimes conflict (Wenzel, 2024).

7. Interaction of Language, Cognition, and Culture.

Overall, the results demonstrate that mental activity concept in the 21st-century English literature is not fixed but it emerges in the interaction of linguistic form, cognitive structure, and cultural context. Language serves not only as a medium for expressing thought but also as a tool for shaping and transforming it.

The analysis confirms that literary discourse provides a unique space for exploring the complexity of human cognition, particularly in intercultural settings. By integrating multiple perspectives, contemporary texts reveal the dynamic and context-dependent nature of mental activity, offering new insights into the relationship between language, thought, and culture (Carl, 2024).

6. Discussion.

The results of this study both confirm and extend existing theoretical approaches within cognitive linguistics and literary discourse analysis. In particular, the findings strongly align with the conceptual metaphor theory developed by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, which posits that they structure abstract domains of experience through embodied metaphorical mappings. The identified patterns of representing mental activity as movement, vision, and possession provide empirical support for this framework. However, the present study extends this perspective by demonstrating that metaphorical conceptualizations are not only embodied but also culturally mediated, especially in intercultural literary contexts.

The results are also consistent with the theory of mental spaces and conceptual blending proposed by Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner. The observed hybridity and multiplicity of cognitive representations in contemporary literary texts reflect the dynamic integration of diverse conceptual inputs. In particular, intercultural narratives illustrate how they combine different cultural frames within a single discourse, resulting in complex and layered representations of mental activity. This finding highlights the relevance of conceptual blending as a key mechanism in literary meaning construction.

From the perspective of cognitive poetics, the findings support the view that readers actively participate in constructing mental representations of fictional minds. The use of narrative techniques such as focalization, free indirect discourse, and implicit representation confirms that literary texts guide but do not fully determine interpretation. The concept of mind style proves particularly useful in explaining how linguistic variation reflects individual and cultural differences in cognition. At the same time, the study extends cognitive poetic approaches by emphasizing the role of intercultural variability in shaping reader response and interpretative strategies.

In comparison with previous research, the present study provides a more integrative account of the relationship between language, cognition, and culture. While earlier studies often focus on either cognitive mechanisms or cultural factors

in isolation, the findings demonstrate that these dimensions are inherently interconnected. The representation of mental activity emerges as a dynamic process in which linguistic structures, conceptual models, and cultural frameworks interact in complex ways.

Furthermore, the analysis of 21st-century literary texts reveals significant shifts in the representation of mental activity, particularly in relation to globalization and cultural hybridity. The increasing presence of multilingual elements and non-linear narrative forms challenges traditional models of cognition and calls for a more flexible theoretical framework. This observation suggests that contemporary literature not only reflects but also reshapes cognitive and communicative practices in a globalized world.

Overall, the findings contribute to the ongoing development of interdisciplinary approaches to discourse analysis and cognitive linguistics. By integrating insights from multiple theoretical traditions, this study offers a more nuanced understanding of how we represent and interpret mental activity in intercultural literary discourse.

7. Conclusions.

This study has demonstrated that "mental activity" concept in the 21st-century English literature some scientists develop through the interplay of linguistic, cognitive, and intercultural factors. The analysis confirms that it represents mental processes by means of a broad spectrum of lexical, grammatical, and stylistic devices. Metaphorical conceptualization plays a central role in structuring the understanding of cognition within literary discourse. The findings indicate that narrative techniques significantly influence how readers perceive and interpret the characters' mental states. Implicitness emerges as a key feature, requiring the reader's active participation in the construction of meaning. Furthermore, the study highlights the importance of intercultural factors in shaping the representation of mental activity.

Cultural diversity contributes to the emergence of hybrid cognitive models within literary texts. The results suggest that contemporary literature reflects ongoing transformations in communicative and cognitive practices. This research supports the integration of cognitive linguistics, discourse analysis, and intercultural communication into literary studies. The findings hold theoretical significance for understanding the interconnectedness of language, thought, and culture. They also have practical implications for literary interpretation, translation, and intercultural communication. Future research could expand this approach by incorporating multilingual data and quantitative methods.

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Гром, О. І. (2026). Осмислення концепту МЕНТАЛЬНА ДІЯЛЬНІСТЬ в англомовній літературі XXI століття у просторі міжкультурної комунікації. *Науковий часопис Українського державного університету імені Михайла Драгоманова. Серія 9. Сучасні тенденції розвитку мов*, 31, 45–56. https://doi.org/10.31392/UDU-nc.series9.2026.31.03

Анотація

У статті досліджено міжкультурну комунікацію крізь призму концепту МЕНТАЛЬНА ДІЯЛЬНІСТЬ у англійській літературі XXI століття. Розглянуто проблему мовної репрезентації та культурної зумовленості когнітивних процесів, зокрема мислення, сприйняття, пам'яті та інтерпретації, у сучасному художньому дискурсі. Метою дослідження є комплексний аналіз концепту ментальної діяльності з урахуванням його мовних, когнітивних та міжкультурних характеристик. Теоретико-методологічну основу становлять положення когнітивної лінгвістики, дискурс-аналізу та когнітивної поетики. Емпіричну базу складають сучасні англомовні літературні тексти, що відображають різноманітні культурні контексти та наративні стратегії.

Результати дослідження засвідчують, що МЕНТАЛЬНА ДІЯЛЬНІСТЬ репрезентується через складну систему лексичних, граматичних і стилістичних засобів, зокрема дієслів мислення, метафоричних конструкцій і наративних технік, таких як фокалізація та невласне пряма мова. Важливу роль відіграє метафоризація когнітивного досвіду, тоді як імпліцитність і відкритість

інтерпретації активізують участь читача в процесі смислотворення. Встановлено, що міжкультурні чинники суттєво впливають на репрезентацію та інтерпретацію ментальної діяльності, зумовлюючи формування гібридних когнітивних моделей у сучасній літературі.

Отримані результати сприяють розвитку міждисциплінарного підходу до аналізу художнього дискурсу та поглиблюють розуміння взаємодії мови, мислення і культури в сучасній літературній комунікації. Дослідження має теоретичне значення для мовознавства й літературознавства, а також практичну цінність для перекладознавства та міжкультурної комунікації.

Ключові слова: *ментальна діяльність, міжкультурна комунікація, когнітивна лінгвістика, метафора, художній дискурс, когнітивна поетика.*

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