
Lingua Inglese 1

Text Analysis and Text Types

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Contact Information

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- Office hours:
 - October, Tuesday 16-18, after class
 - From November Tuesday 14.30-16.30

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Overview of the Course

- Course Schedule:
 - 18 academic hours – 9 lessons
 - Two lectures per week for 5 weeks

- Class Meetings:
 - Tuesday 14.30-16, 2.6
 - Wednesday 8.30-10, T.6
 - Last lesson: **30 October**

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Topics of the Course

- The Universe of the Text:
 - Pragmatics
 - Conversational Implicature
 - Speech Act Theory
 - Context and Co-Text

- Main Elements in a Text:
 - Producer
 - Receiver
 - Goal of the Message

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Topics of the Course

- Text Linguistics
 - Standards of Textuality
 - Regulative Principles

- The Notion of Text Typology and Genre
 - Main Features of the Various Text Types

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Evaluation

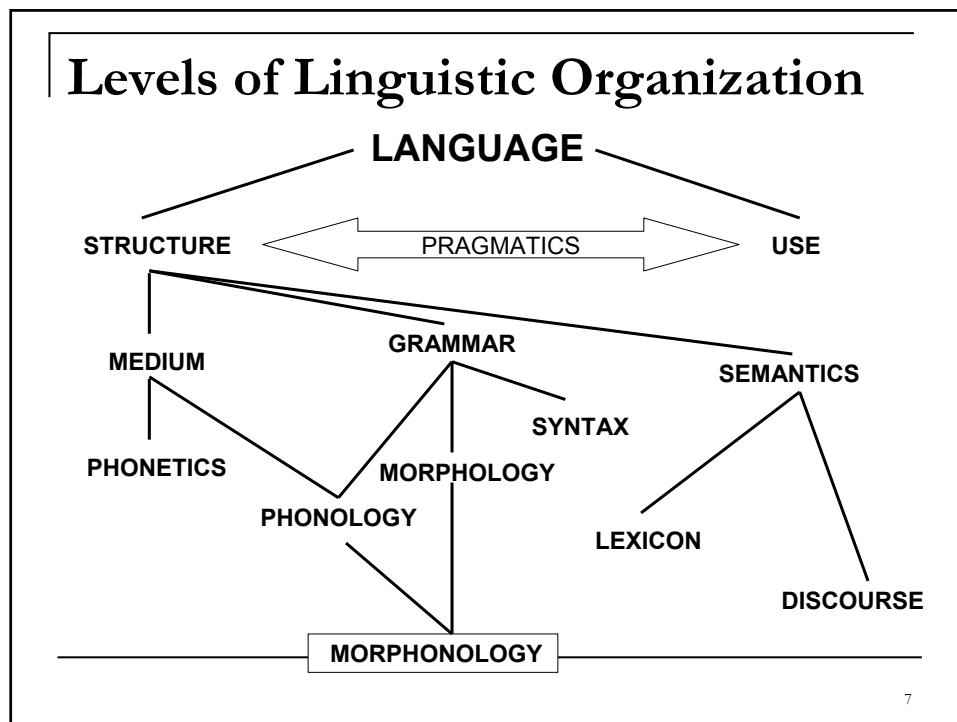
- The final exam will consist in a 2-hour written test, with open questions, exercises and analyses

- Attending students may opt for a test during the month of December, which will be considered as a final exam



Attendance to class is strongly encouraged

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Levels of Linguistic Organization

- The levels of linguistic analysis are subsystems of the language system, but their denominations also refer to the fields of study in which the respective phenomena are studied. They also represent the linguistic components of a text

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Linguistic Subfields

- **PHONETICS**: it refers to the sounds of a language, as they are actually realized, 1) how they are produced, 2) their physical properties, 3) how they are perceived.
- **PHONOLOGY**: it refers to the sound system of a language, 1) how sounds are organized and differentiated to form an integrated system capable of expressing meanings. Basic notions are phonemes, phones, allophones, minimal pairs, phonetic/phonemic transcription etc.

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Linguistic Subfield (2)

- **MORPHOLOGY** (or word-formation): it refers to the internal structure of words and the processes (Morphological Rules) whereby complex words are constructed. Sub-branches are inflection, derivation and compounding. Basic notions are morphemes (free and bound), affixes, endings, bases (word, roots, stems) etc.
- **GRAMMAR** is the study of the classes of words, their inflections and their syntactical relations and functions.

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Complexity in Language

- Complexity in languages has to do with the fact that they are **composite systems**, i.e. the result of the interaction of many levels
- Which level first?
- Bloomfield (1887-1949): phonetic description, phonology, morphology, syntax and semantics (bottom-up approach)
- J.R. Firth (1890-1960): the business of the linguist is likened to a lift which moves freely from one level to another (with no priority to any)

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Linguistic Subfield (3)

- **SEMANTICS:**
 - The study of meaning; how words and sentences are related to the concepts/things they stand for and the situations they describe
 - It is also concerned with the relationship between meanings
 - It deals with the ways meanings of words are combined to give meanings to larger units (phrases, clauses, sentences, discourse)

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Linguistic Subfield (4)

■ PRAGMATICS

- It studies the factors that govern our choice of language in social interaction and the effects of our choice on others.

■ TEXT/DISOURSE LINGUISTICS

- It analyses the way sentences work in a sequence to produce coherent stretches of language.

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Can there be a Unified Theory of Language?

- A theory of language as a whole would have to integrate **structure, function, mind, society and change**.
- A theory of language would have to identify some unifying principle and common property or properties across these facets of language
- A theory of language should be based on a unified model applicable to language as a whole

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Integration of Levels of Linguistic Analysis: an Example

How the Whale got his Throat (R. Kipling)

On the sea, once upon a time, O my Best Beloved,
there was a whale, and he ate fishes. He ate the
starfish and the garfish, and the crab and the dab,
and the plaice and the dace, and the skate and his
mate, and the mackereel and the pickereel, and the
truly twirly-whirly eel. All the fishes he could find in
the sea he ate with his mouth – so!

- Consider the phonetic structure (presence of rhyme), the semantic choices (many nouns for fish species) and the particular syntactic choices (inversion of the subject, vocative) as well as pragmatic choices due to the target audience for whom this text has been produced

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Special Focus on Pragmatics



- When we communicate, we do not always say what we mean
- The meaning of messages we communicate cannot always be computed as the sum of the words in isolation
 - *Can you pass the salt?*
 - The verb *can* denotes ability, but this question does not refer to the ability of the hearer. It is an actual request
- **Pragmatics** can be defined as **the discipline concerned with the study of language use, and all the factors which determine our choices in language**
- Some questions pragmatics is concerned with are
 - How do we manage to understand each other, if we regularly mean something other than what we say?
 - Why don't people just say what they mean?

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A Bit of History

- Ch. Morris (1938), the philosopher who introduced the term Pragmatics within Semiotics distinguished three components:
 - **SYNTAX**: “the formal relation of signs to one another”
 - **SEMANTICS**: “the relation of signs to the objects to which the signs are applicable”
 - **PRAGMATICS**: “the relations of signs to their interpreters → i.e. people”
 - “It is a sufficient characterization of pragmatics to say that it deals with the biotic aspects of semiosis, that is, with all the psychological, biological and sociological phenomena which occur in the functioning of signs” (1938: 108)



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Overview of Pragmatics

- Pioneers in America:
 - John Ross (1960): Performative Analysis
 - George Lakoff (1971): generative syntax cannot be separated from the study of language use
- Pioneers in Europe:
 - John Firth (1957): context of situation
 - MAK Hallyday (1967): language as a social semiotics
- Theories
 - J. L. Austin (1962) “How to Do Things with Words”
 - J.R. Searle (1969) “Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language”
 - H.P. Grice (1969) “Logic and Conversation”

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Towards a Definition of Pragmatics

- F. Saussure  language
langue
parole
 - Pragmatics is the realm of parole
- N. Chomsky  competence
performance
 - Pragmatics refers to performance
- “Pragmatics is the study of all those aspects of meaning not captured in a semantic theory” (Gazdar 1979)
- “The term pragmatics covers both context-dependent aspects of language structure and principles of language usage and understanding that have nothing or little to do with linguistic structure (Levinson 1983)

Towards An Operative Definition of Pragmatics

- Pragmatics is concerned with the study of language as use, i.e. related to concrete situations.
- It focuses on all aspects pertaining to the use of language in social interaction and their effects on communication
- It addresses the mechanisms governing our choices in conversation

Why is Pragmatics needed in Linguistics?

- Let us consider the relation of the pragmatics-semantics-syntax trichotomy to Chomsky's **competence-performance** distinction
- In Chomsky's view, grammars are models of **competence**, i.e. knowledge of a language idealized from the any variation



Thus, since pragmatics is concerned with context, it is not part of competence, and is out of the scope of any grammatical definition

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Why is Pragmatics needed in Linguistics? (2)

- Let us suppose that we require that an adequate grammatical description include specifications of the meaning of every words
- Certain words, such as *anyway*, *well*, *oh* have a meaning, only in so far as there is a context in which they are used

Either grammars must make reference to pragmatic information, or they cannot include a full grammatical description of a language

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Pragmatic Interpretation

Language radically underdetermines the meanings that we can convey to utterances in a variety of different ways

Examples

- *I am afraid we cannot come*
 - Polite way to refuse an invitation
- *Uncle Sam Wants You - Because He Doesn't Have a Clue*
(from an American Democratic Campaign website)
 - Republicans don't know how to handle the political situation abroad. (In It. Lo zio Sam non sa più dove sbattere la testa)

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Pragmatic Interpretation (2)

- *They have a Picasso in the living room*
 - A painting by Picasso
- *They are selling items*
 - A: What are they doing? B: They are selling items.
 - A: What kind of things are these? B: They are selling items
- *The agents searched the passengers, because **they** were suspicious*
- *The agents searched the passengers, because **they** feared a terrorist attack*
 - The pronoun they has different reference in the two expressions

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Pragmatic Interpretation (3)

- In the examples *I, we, they*, called **deictic expressions**, can be interpreted only with reference to context, and with the continual awareness of the progression of discourse
- Contextual or real-world knowledge is always needed to activate the correct interpretation of an utterance, as matched by the one assigned by the speaker
- Consider the following example:
 - *A: Mary, the telephone!*
 - *B: I'm in the toilet!*
 - *A* pragmatically implies a request for *B* to go and answer the phone.
 - *B* pragmatically implies that she cannot go.

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Main Topics in Pragmatics

- **Deixis**: expressions that cannot be interpreted at all unless there is a physical context (Yule, 1996: 129)
 - *I, you, they* → person deixis
 - Other categories include social, spatial, temporal and discourse deixis
- **The recovery of implicit meanings**:
 - **Implicature**: referring to an indirect or implicit meaning of an utterance derived from context that is not present from its conventional use
 - **Presupposition**: referring to the logical meaning of a sentence or meanings logically associated with or entailed by a sentence
- **Speech Acts**: implying that, by each utterance, a speaker not only says something, but also does certain things: giving information, stating a fact or hinting an attitude

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Conversational Implicature

- Conversational implicature (Grice 1967) is a **context-based inference**, which, unlike entailments and presuppositions, cannot be made from the utterance alone
- It is dependent on both the **context** of the utterance and the **shared knowledge** between speaker and hearer

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Conversational Implicature (2)

- Language is a social phenomenon, and is grounded in interaction
- Talk exchanges are not random successions of unrelated utterances, but follow a certain structure
- Participants in a talk exchange are assumed to recognize a common purpose, or at least a mutually accepted direction in every conversation
- By participating in a conversation, a speaker implicitly signals that he/she agrees to co-operate in the joint activity, to adhere to certain rules

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The Co-Operative Principle

- Thus, Grice formulates the Co-Operative Principle:
 - “ Make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged.”



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The Maxims of Conversation

- The principle is elaborated by a set of maxims:
- **The Maxim of Quantity**
 1. *Make your contribution as informative as is required (for the current purpose of the exchange)*
 2. *Do not make your contribution more informative than is required*
- **The Maxim of Quality:** Try to make your contribution one that is true
 1. *Do not say what you believe to be false*
 2. *Do not say that for which you lack evidence*

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The Maxims of Conversation (2)

- **The Maxim of Relation:** Be Relevant

- **The Maxim of Manner:** Be Perspicuous
 1. *Avoid obscurity of expression*
 2. *Avoid ambiguity*
 3. *Be brief (avoid unnecessary prolixity)*
 4. *Be orderly*

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Communication as Cooperation

- Grice emphasises that the Co-Operative Principles and the maxims are NOT a set of rigid or prescriptive rules, but rather they derive from considerations of rationality applicable to all kinds of co-operative exchanges

- Conversation is here viewed as rational action

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How Implicatures Arise

- The maxims generate implicatures in various ways
 - By assuming that the speaker is **adhering** to the maxims
 - When a maxim has been **violated**
 - In cases when the speaker is ostentatiously **flouting** a maxim, i.e. deliberately disregarding it

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Adhering to the Maxims

- A: *I'm out of petrol*
- B: *There's a garage just round the corner*
 - B would be infringing the maxim "Be relevant", if he did not think that the garage might be open, and that A might buy petrol there
- A: *Does Bill have a girlfriend?*
- B: *He has been paying a lot of visits to New York lately*
 - If we interpret the supermaxim "Be perspicuous" as related not just to what has been said, but also to the connection between the various statements, there is no reason for thinking that B is violating the maxim

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Violating a Maxim

- A: *Where does François live?*
- B: *Somewhere in the South of France.*
 - B violates Quantity (less information than 'required'). So how is this co-operative?
 - B is assumed as cooperative and not opting out (deliberately refusing to cooperate), since he/she adheres to Quality
 - This leads us to implicate that B may be faced by a **clash**: he does not know where François lives exactly. This is why B's answer is rather vague

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Violating a Maxim (2)

- Not all forms of maxim violation are equal. If someone unostentatiously violate a maxim, in some situation he might be liable to mislead the addressee
- Cfr. the following example
 - A: *Where does François live?*
 - B: *He lives in Verona, in Via San Francesco n.27.*
 - It violates Quality (it is a false statement)

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Flouting Maxims

- It occurs when
 - It is obvious to the hearer that a maxim has been violated
 - It is obvious to the hearer that the speaker intends him to recognize that a maxim has been flouted
 - There are no signs that the speaker is opting out of the co-operative principle
- A maxim is **exploited** and the utterance is not to be taken literally

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Flouting Maxims (2)

- **Quantity**
 - *“Dear Sir, Mr X’s command of English is excellent, and his attendance at tutorials has been regular. Yours, ...”*
 - (A Professor was asked to write a testimonial about a pupil, who is a candidate for a philosophy job)
 - Given the short letter, and lack of any reference to philosophy, we are invited to think that he is reluctant to write a favourable judgement (he thinks that Mr. X is not good at philosophy!)
 - *Boys will be boys*
 - *War is war (TAUTOLOGIES)*
 - *A: How do I look?*
 - *B: Well, your shoes are nice*

Flouting Maxims (3)

- **Quantity** (2nd maxim)
 - A: "Could you tell me where an ice-cream parlour is in the nearby?"
 - B: "It is in High Street and it is called "Top Ice-cream". My friend Paula works there, she's a blond girl with curled hair. They have more than 50 flavours there, but I always choose chocolate and cream..."
 - Over informative!
- **Quality**
 - *Mrs Thatcher is an Iron lady* (METAPHOR)
 - A: *Shall we have something to eat?*
 - B: *Yes, I'm starving!* (HYPERBOLE)
 - *Did I mention how I love waking up at 4 every morning to get to work on time?* (IRONY)

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Flouting Maxims (4)

- **Manner**
 - *She produced a series of sounds that roughly corresponded to the song Home Sweet Home* (said of someone who was singing)
 - A: *Where are you going?*
 - B: *I was thinking of going and get some of that funny white stuff for somebody....*
 - A and B are a couple of parents, and B avoids saying that he is going out to buy ice-cream for their child, as a surprise
- **Relation**
 - A: *Did you hear about Mary...?*
 - B: *Yes, well, it rained nearly the whole time we were there*
 - This is an irrelevant comment. It might be justified thinking that Mary is a colleague of both A and B. Suppose Mary approaches, seen by B only. Then B's remark might be interpreted as "Mary is coming! Be careful what you say"

Flouting Maxims: An Example

- Relation
 - Charles: How's your gorgeous girlfriend?
 - John: She's no longer my girlfriend. (Quantity Violation)
 - Charles: Ah, dear. I wouldn't get too gloomy about it. Rumour has it she never stopped bonking Toby de Lisle in case you didn't work out.
 - John: She is now my wife.
 - Charles: Excellent. Congratulations. Any kids or anything, John? Do we hear the patter of tiny feet? (Relation Violation, shift to a different topic)

(From the movie *Four Weddings and a Funeral*)

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Flouting Maxims: An Example (2)

- Flouting is effectively an invitation to find a new meaning, beyond 'what is said' – one that makes the utterance co-operative after all
- Generally associated with particular rhetorical effects

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Opting Out

- A speaker may also simply 'opt out' of the Co-operative Principle – i.e. being openly unco-operative:
 - *My lips are sealed; I can say no more*
 - Or
 - A: *Do you usually take this train?*
 - B: no answer
- Even in these cases, some messages have been conveyed after all

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Characteristics of Implicatures

- Conversational implicatures can be distinguished from other types of pragmatic phenomena according to the following criteria:
 - **Context-Dependence**
 - **Defeasibility/Cancellability**
 - **Non-detachability**
 - **Calculability**

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Context-Dependence

- An expression with a single meaning (i.e. expressing the same proposition) can give rise to different conversational implicatures in different contexts
 - A: *Have you cleared the table and washed the dishes?*
 - B: *I've cleared the table.*
→ *I have not washed the dishes (yet)*

 - A: *Am I in time for supper?*
 - B: *I've cleared the table.*
→ *No, you are too late*

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Context-Dependence (2)

- This criterion aims to distinguish conversational implicatures from **conventional implicatures**, namely non-truth-conditional aspects of meaning conventionally attached to particular linguistic forms
 - *He is an Englishman. He is **therefore** brave*
 - *She is poor, **but** she is honest*
 - ***Even** Bill likes Mary*

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Defeasibility/Cancellability

- **Conversational implicatures can be cancelled** by additional material, without contradiction
 - *A: Did the Minister attend the meeting and sign the agreement?*
 - *B: The Minister attended the meeting*
 - *B1: The Minister attended the meeting. A statement will be issued later regarding the agreement*
- In B1, we are no longer invited to derive the implicature that the minister did not sign (or has not the intention to) the agreement
- In the case of **conventional implicature**, this would not be possible. It would lead to **anomaly**
 - *John has not arrived yet.*
 - *?John has not arrived yet. I know for a fact that he is not coming (not possible)*

Non-Detachability

- The same propositional content in the same context will give rise to the same conversational implicature, in whatever form it is expressed, i.e. the implicature is tied to meaning, not to form. **You do not lose the implicature, by substituting synonyms**
 - *A: I've run out of petrol.*
 - *B: There's a garage just round the corner.*
 - *B1: You'll find a filling station just beyond that bend*
 - *A: Has Bill got a girlfriend?*
 - *B: He's been making a lot of trips to Glasgow lately.*
 - *B1: He's been a regular visitor to the Glaswegian area recently.*

Calculability

- Conversational implicatures must be capable of being worked out
- The presence of a conversational implicature must be capable of being worked out, for even if it can be intuitively grasped, if the intuition cannot be replaced by an argument, it is not a conversational implicature, but a conventional one

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Calculability (2)

- To work out that a particular conversational implicature is present, the hearer will rely on the following data:
 - *The conventional meaning of the words used, together with the identity of any references that might be involved*
 - *The Cooperative Principle and its Maxims*
 - *The context of the utterance*
 - *Other items of background knowledge*
 - *The fact that all relevant items falling under the previous headings are available to both participants, and both participants know or assume it to be the case*

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Generalized vs. Particularized Implicatures

- **Generalized implicatures** are those that arise without any particular scenario or special context being necessary, but are instead typically associated with the proposition expressed
 - I walked into a house
 - > The house was not mine
 - Most of Kate's friends are nice
 - > Not all of Kate's friends are nice

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Generalized vs. Particularized Implicatures (2)

- Particularized implicatures, on the other hand, rely on the construction of such context
 - A: Will Sally be at the meeting this afternoon?
 - B: Her car broke down
 - Sally won't be at the meeting
 - A: What on earth happened to my steak?
 - B: The dog is looking very happy
 - (perhaps) the dog has eaten the steak
 - A: Has mum already left to go to work?
 - B: Her car is parked outside
 - Mum might still be at home

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Grice's Theory: A Summary

- Conversational implicature is meaning that is intentionally communicated, but not explicitly
- It is generally thought of as context-dependent, cancellable, non-detachable and calculable meaning
- Implicatures are inferred on the basis of what is explicitly communicated and contextual factors
- According to the Gricean approach, implicatures follow from the conversational maxims that underlie co-operation

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Evaluation

- Grice put forward an idea of fundamental importance, namely that every act of communication carries expectations which it then exploits
- The basic assumptions of his approach had important consequences in laying the groundwork for an inferential model of communication to become an explanatory model
- This model had to be reconsidered in **psychologically realistic terms**, since in Grice's apparatus the speaker is portrayed as an idealised entity, while the hearer configures himself as "a mirror image of the speaker"

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Evaluation (2)

- Even though Grice recognised that speakers and addressees cooperate, the maxims are directed to speakers, not addressees, and cooperation is then equated to a series of autonomous actions, the first by the speaker and the second by the addressee
- For a proper understanding of communicative acts, they must be reconsidered in terms of **interactional behaviour**