

## “IMPLICATURE-LADEN” ELICITATIONS IN TALK RADIO SHOWS

ÁGNES HERCZEG-DELI

Eszterházy Károly College, Eger, Hungary  
agnes@ektf.hu

### Abstract

Indirect elicitations in talk radio programmes on BBC Radio are not uncommon, notwithstanding, misunderstanding between the host and his conversational partner is not frequent. Investigating some of the reasons this paper focuses on how the socio-cultural and cognitive factors of the context interweave in discourse. The author suggests that valid interpretation and appropriate response to inferred elicitations can be best explained within the framework of Relevance Theory, and more specifically, with the presumption of accessibility of schemas obtained from the cognitive environment of the discourse partners. Through examples of empirical research the paper aims to reveal how the mutual knowledge of the participants controls discourse via the mental processes occurring in the interaction of two minds.

### 1. Introduction

The term *implicature-laden* has been borrowed from Robyn Carston (2002: 144), and it is used here to refer to a common strategy of hosts of radio programmes: using less evident linguistic forms to elicit information from their conversational partners. The paper takes a relevance theoretical approach to how the speaker's implied meaning is interpreted by the hearer as an elicitation for response in two specific types of natural conversations: in the talk shows (known as talk radio) and phone-in programmes of BBC Radio. My investigation is a pragmatics-grounded analysis of discourse exchanges.

Carston (2002: 129) gives an outline of three possible stances on the domain of pragmatics and on what sort of a cognitive system it is:

- (a) It is a system for interpreting human actions/behaviour in terms of the mental states (beliefs, intentions) underlying them (i.e. it is identical to the general 'theory of mind' system);
- (b) It is a system for the understanding of *communicative* behaviour, that is, for figuring out what the producer of the ostensive behaviour is trying to communicate;
- (c) It is dedicated to the understanding of specifically *linguistic* communicative behaviour.

As regards such a trichotomy, Carston's classification of the interests of pragmatics seems too delicate for my own purposes. I take a more comprehensive approach here than any one of those implied by the three issues listed above. My research – based on empirical data – aimed at the examination of both ostensive verbal signs of the function of the speaker's initiation move and those exchanges where the understanding of the first speaker's intention is due to contextual factors other than clear linguistic signals of communicative intention. In this paper I will focus on utterances that are non-interrogative in form, and yet elicit a response.

For a point of departure I take the relevance theoretic account as an explanatory paradigm for utterance interpretation and for the construal of the concept of context, and I explore the cognitive effects of some linguistic representations of the speaker's elicitive intentions.

## 2. Theoretical background

Several of the major issues of Relevance Theory are, in fact, forecast in the discussion of indirect speech acts by Searle (1975). By pointing at the effect of mutually shared background information – both linguistic and non-linguistic – and the powers of rationality and inference on the part of the hearer, Searle emphasizes that speakers communicate to their hearers more than what the linguistic form they choose means out of its context (1975: 60 - 61). Grice (1975) similarly highlights the commonplace of philosophical logic that there are divergences in form and meaning in natural language use. One of the upshots of this observation is his introduction of the concept of conversational implicature (cf. *ibid.*). For Grice a crucial issue for the full identification of conventional meaning, i.e. what the speaker said, is the identity of the referents, the time of utterance, and the meaning on the particular occasion of utterance, of the phrase uttered, while implicatures are related to different maxims, for the description of which he introduces the term *cooperative principle* (CP) (1975: 44). He calls non-conventional implicatures *conversational implicatures*, which are essentially connected with certain general features of discourse (*ibid.*: 45). He notes that the presence of a conversational implicature must be capable of being worked out even if it is intuitively grasped, and then he specifies the data the hearer will exploit for interpretation as follows:

To work out that a particular conversational implicature is present, the hearer will rely on the following data: (1) the conventional meaning of the words used, together with the identity of any referents that may be involved; (2) the CP and its maxims; the context, linguistic or otherwise, of the utterance; (4) other items of background knowledge, and (5) the fact (or supposed fact) that all relevant items falling under the previous headings are available to both participants and both participants know or assume this to be the case (Grice 1975: 50).

Grice's reference to the cooperative efforts of the participants, their common purposes or mutually accepted directions in part predict what Sperber and Wilson describe in their cognitive pragmatic approach as the individual's (*total*) *cognitive environment* (1986: 39, 45-6). Rejecting the philosophical hypothesis of mutual knowledge, in their account for utterance interpretation Sperber and Wilson argue for *context selection* as a vital

process in comprehension which is controlled by the *cognitive environment* of the participants (ibid.: 15-21, 45). During the process the hearer makes choices from the possible interpretations at every crucial point of the discourse exploiting some shared assumptions about the world between her and the speaker (cf. Sperber & Wilson 1986: 14 – 17). It is via the concepts of *cognitive environment* and *context selection* that in Relevance Theory the *context* is interpreted as a *psychological construct*, and very sensibly, it is considered dynamic in the communication process, similarly as it is assumed by van Dijk (1977:191; 2006) or Ochs (1979). In Sperber and Wilson’s theory the participants’ *knowledge* or *cognitive environment* may also involve “expectations about the future, scientific hypotheses or religious beliefs, anecdotal memories, general cultural assumptions, beliefs about the mental state of the speaker” (1986: 14-5), therefore any of these contextual factors may play a role in the interpretation of discourse.

Following the logic of Gricean pragmatics Wilson and Sperber (1993: 1) argue that the interpretation of an utterance involves both decoding and inferencing; the decoded message serves as input for *inferences* in a complex mental process controlled by some hypotheses about the speaker’s intentions as well as by the contextual enrichment of the linguistic form. One of the cornerstones of Relevance Theory is the postulation that there is a range of *cognitive effects* that the processing of an input may yield, which is identified by Sperber and Wilson as *contextual implication*, the result of the revision of available assumptions. This happens by the enrichment of lexically encoded concepts through the strengthening or abandonment of the hearer’s assumptions (see Sperber and Wilson 1995: 108-117; Wilson and Sperber 2004: 608). The theory presupposes the “*mutual manifestness*” of informative and communicative intention echoing the Gricean postulate that “communication is successful not when hearers recognise the linguistic meaning of the utterance, but when they infer the speaker’s ‘meaning’ from it” (Sperber & Wilson 1986: 23). As regards mutual understanding, Sperber and Wilson (1986) make the following note:

...communication can be successful without resulting in an exact duplication of thoughts in communicator and audience. We see communication as a matter of enlarging mutual cognitive environments, not of duplicating thoughts (Sperber & Wilson 1986: 192-3).

In this respect, Carston’s view is similar. She suggests that any utterance licenses more than one interpretation, and if the addressee recovers any one of these with very similar import to the assumptions the speaker wanted to communicate, “comprehension is successful: that is, it is good enough” (Carston 2004: 823). The necessity of a joint effort of the participants in the interpretation process is implied by Carston as follows:

when a code is involved it need do no more than provide whatever clues, whatever piece of evidence, the speaker judges necessary to channel the inferential process in the right direction. The linguistically encoded element of an utterance is not generally geared towards achieving as high a degree of explicitness as possible, but rather towards keeping processing effort down (no more than is necessary for the recovery of the intended cognitive effects), so information that is clearly already highly activated in the addressee’s mind... is often not given linguistic expression (Carston 2002: 130).

The question arises then: how can the processing effort be kept down? As regards speaker judgement and hearer resources Sperber and Wilson propose the following:

...the speaker must make some assumptions about the hearer's cognitive abilities and contextual resources – these assumptions will necessarily be reflected in the way she communicates and in particular what she chooses to mention explicitly or what she chooses to leave implicit (1986: 218).

From Grice's reasoning on conversational implicatures and Sperber and Wilson's above proposition it follows that the participants' assumptions regarding the meaning of an utterance are entirely contextual. In what follows the concept of *context* is clarified, and interpreted for the purposes of the analysis of the data.

### 3. Context and contextual factors in the data

Underlining the crucial role of the mental factors in communication, in the spirit of Relevance Theory I assume that the *context* comprises the following constituents:

- a. the broader circumstances: code and culture
- b. the immediate circumstances: time, the physical factors (location) and the social factors (the co-participants) of the communicational situation
- c. psychological factors: the speaker's goal, will, the participants' State of Mind (SOM): knowledge potentials and experience (information sources, memory, real knowledge (the K-factor) as well as lack of knowledge, beliefs and assumptions, expectations (the U-factor), and the participants' cognitive capacities and logical skills
- d. the linguistic environment of the utterance (= preceding discourse) (cf. also Herczeg-Deli: 2009a:106; 2009b).

In a prototypical natural conversation like a spontaneous family conversation between equal partners, speaker roles usually change from time to time, and in the course of a long conversation the speech acts performed by the participants can also show a great variety. In this respect the corpus of my investigations is different.

The talk radio show is a specialized genre, and so is the phone-in programme, hence my data represent communication situations determined by some *specific socio-cultural factors*. Such programmes have an easily identifiable goal: to make the guest or the caller speak. As a result, the participant roles are fixed: the host asks and his conversational partner is expected to give relevant responses providing information about the topics introduced by the host. In such conversational situations the so-called power relations are pre-determined throughout the conversation, which necessarily causes a kind of *asymmetry* of discourse. The topics of the conversation are typically certain current issues related to the work and life of the guest, which are supposed to appeal to the listeners. In terms of the major characteristics of the genre the context is given, preset, and can be considered constant. What is variable, however, all through the discourse is a set of the psychological factors: the participants' beliefs and knowledge concerning the topic of discussion, the truth and reality at various points in the discourse. To refer to these factors in the mental context, I use the terms *the K-factor* – for the knowledge factor – and *the U-factor* – for the unknown, unfamiliarity and uncertainty of

the speaker –, and I presume that these constituents of the total cognitive environment of the communicational event continually get activated and alternate in the participants’ mind. Speaker assumptions similarly change about the knowledge of the communication partner in the current linguistic environment, i.e. in the course of the discourse.

It is very probable, however, that the participants’ assumptions about each other’s goals, intentions, and intellectual capacities are also stable throughout; they are aware of their roles and want to be cooperative and relevant. Their hypotheses about each other’s cognitive abilities and logical skills are probably also constant in the sense that their associated assumptions are definite and positive.

Whether the interpretation matches the speaker’s communicative intention is obvious from his acceptance of the response, which I consider a valid indicator of the speaker meaning.

A specific feature of the genre is that there is a third party present, the presumed listener. Even if the host of the programme appears to be a ‘non-knower’ in the discourse, the primary target, the assumed real ‘non-knower’ is the listener, for whom the conversation is performed. This circumstance induces a strong contextual factor, and although the linguistic resources available for the speaker to make choices from for the manifestation of his intention are not restricted or determined by the situation, the speaker’s options may well be affected by it. By avoiding monotony as a possible effect of too many interrogative questions, the host’s decisions about the lexicalization of his intention may be made for the sake of a more refined style, and a higher quality of programme.

#### 4. Inferences and assumed cognitive environment

Appropriate signalling of meaning is a crucial question both in speech and in writing. Hoey (1983) argues that “under-signalling” in texts may cause difficulties for the reader, and Coupland (1984: 57) – quoted in Allison (1991: 378) – also suggests that as regards explicitness for the signalling of cohesive relations in discourse, there exists an “optimum level”. Coupland (ibid.) assumes that while deficiencies in indicating discourse relations under the optimum may create a barrier in the interpretation, signals above that level can become irksome or even counter-productive. My view is that such an “optimum” is relative to the assumed cognitive environment of the discourse partner (the assumed reader or – in the case of conversation – the conversational partner, the “interlocutor”).

The understanding of the relevance of an utterance and its meaning in a given context emerges in the current cognitive environment of speaker and hearer. Concerned with lexis and phraseology in semantic as well as in pragmatic perspectives Stubbs (2001) makes reference to the crucial role of certain *knowledge* - which can be unconscious -, and emphasizes that communication would be impossible without the assumptions which are embodied in schemata: “what is said is merely a trigger: a linguistic fragment which allows hearers to infer a schema, which in turn provides default values which can lead to further inferences” (Stubbs 2001: 443).

Natural conversations abound in evidence that verbal signals of hypotheses or unspecific lexical units in initiation moves of discourse exchanges can serve as triggers for the discourse pattern Elicitation – Response. Such linguistic elements typically

indicate the U-factor of the cognitive environment, and control the function of the first speaker's utterance. The underlying triggering factor is accessible in both the speaker's and the hearer's minds; the speaker assumes that it emerges in the hearer's cognitive environment as it exists in his, and that as a result, contextually appropriate inference is likely to emerge. In the addressee's mind the spark is the inferred meaning; with that in his mind he feels assigned to provide a matching second member of the relevant schema evoked by the context. Inspections of conversational data clearly show that cognitive schemata are constitutive sequences in discourse exchanges, and as such, they control the organization and interpretation of speakers' utterances.

## 5. Natural Discourse: Syntax and Lexis in Pragmatic Perspectives

The maxim of cooperative behaviour requires appropriate management of the communicative situation, and if there is a gap in the mind of a participant which is considered relevant, that gap has to be filled in by the partner. As a characteristic feature of the data, the host's discourse moves typically show lack of knowledge or uncertainty as regards specific information about the addressee, which – due to the nature of the genre – occasionally may be only pretended. Hence, there arises a certain kind of cognitive gap mutually manifest to the conversational partners, which is a dominant constituent of the context.

The corpus bounds in various linguistic strategies used to realize the communicative function of eliciting a response from the conversational partner. While the syntactic structure can be either interrogative or declarative there is a wide range of expressions representing the speaker's meaning. Certain linguistic forms are obviously **interchangeable**, which is detectable in those instances when the speaker's reruns show his hesitation about the “best” choice:

- (1) A: But *it must have started* before that, Keith, I mean, *you must as a ..., did you have* a very good English teacher? We were talking about English teachers earlier on.  
B: I did. I did have a good English teacher.....
- (2) A: *Is it a it was what I was wondering, is it a comedy, or a tragedy, so what's the feeling?*  
B: Well, what can I say? It is a very very funny play, but it will also make you cry. So that's all I can say. It's a sort of a saga, you know.
- (3) A: *Is that, so you specialize* totally in African violets.  
B: Indeed.

In the first speaker's utterances in the three extracts above interrogatives alternate with other linguistic realizations of the wish to elicit response from the partner. Signals of the concept of hypothesis occur (see the modal verb *must* representing probability in (1)A above or the inference marker *so* in (3)A), explicit reference is made to the wish to ask: the means is the conventional, polite expression *I was wondering* in (2)A, and it seems

that in a particular context any of these verbalizations of speaker intention can do the job.

In the following parts of the paper I look more closely at non-interrogative elicitations, and investigate those in terms of the lexical signals of the speaker’s intended meaning.

### 5.1 Lack of knowledge explicitly signalled

In extract (4) the host, speaker A, clearly signals that he was unaware of a fact referred to by his conversational partner. To communicate this he makes the assertion: *I never actually knew*:

(4) B: 1956. It was at Wembly. We sang we ...we and danced and swam.

A: *I never actually knew* she came over and did a show over here.

B: Yes, she did. I think that was the only show she ever did here.

A’s words elicit confirmation of a past reality as well as a strong assumption of his guest – *that was the only show she ever did here* –, which comes up in the conversation as further new information related to the issue of the discourse.

Since they require little effort for interpretation, utterances with explicit linguistic signals of lack of knowledge have a very strong communicative effect on the conversational partner; they are probably the strongest after interrogatives on an imagined scale of elicitive force.

### 5.2 A performative verb and implicature

The first speaker’s words in the following dialogue sound straightforward as the verb *ask* directly refers to the speech act he intends to perform:

(5) A: *I must ask you* about the spelling of your name, incidentally. It’s Is ‘e’ double ‘l’, ‘a’, ‘y’, ‘n’, ‘e’. It’s a long way round.

B: (laughs) Well, it’s in an effort to get it pronounced like the French Helène.

Unambiguous as the meaning of the verb *ask* is and close as the speaker’s utterance looks to direct speech acts, A’s elicitation here can be considered borderline between an explicit direct speech act and an indirect one. The modal auxiliary *must* makes a noticeable modification to the meaning of the utterance: it refers to the epistemic (mental) state of the speaker, his certainty about his insufficient knowledge. As a result, the expression *I must ask you* actually implicates *I don’t know and I’m asking you*. In this context the verb otherwise conventionally considered performative becomes a constituent of conversational implicature with the function of asking for information.

### 5.3 Speaker's hypothesis implicating elicitation

In any communication situation the participants' awareness of contextual information available for them serves as a basis for plausible inferences, which can be put to communicative use. The following extracts provide examples of how the speaker's contextual assumptions work in initiation moves:

- (6) A: You've just been made redundant, ***I gather***, talking of other things.  
 B: Unfortunately, yes, just recently.
- (7) A: But it ***it seems to me*** you're just looking for tolerance rather than unity.  
 B: Yes, I want tolerance, you see, you are not going to get unity with all the Christian people. You don't have unity in the in the Jewish faith. They have progressives and they have the Hassids, but they've got they're still all Jewish.
- (8) A: Anyway, it's lovely to have spoken to you, John. And ***I understand*** I can have a photograph.  
 B: You can have a photograph, yes, but you can have a sticker as well.
- (9) A: Judith, ***I take it***, that, broadly speaking, women get paid between two thirds and three quarters of the income of their male counterparts.  
 B: Yes, I'm afraid, that's true.
- (10) B1: (laughs) Well it's in a an effort to get it pronounced like the French Heléne.  
 A1: (laughs) Successful, ***I hope***.  
 B2: Mostly.  
 A2: Good.

The expressions *I gather*, *it seems to me*, *I take it*, *I hope* in dialogues (6), (7), (8), (9) and (10), respectively, very probably activate some knowledge available in the addressee's cognitive environment. What these words indicate is the speaker's hypothesis that the issue is considered by him/ her mutually manifest or that its knowledge is available in the addressee's cognitive domain (see extract (10) for the latter). As a result, in each case above, the speaker's hypothetical proposition is interpreted as elicitation; in (6), (9), (10) for confirmation, while in (7) and (8) for information.

The coherence of such interactions is partly due to the existence of a typical rhetorical pattern in the participants' cognitive environment, which has been introduced and discussed in linguistic literature in a semiotic / semantic approach to written text as the Hypothetical – Real pattern (see Winter 1982: 196-197; 1992; 1994) and Hoey (1983: 128-129; 1994). To interpret the cognitive relationship between the utterance with the communicative effect of elicitation and the response to it I will turn to the concept of this schema.



The hypothetical and real elements of a text are marked by the writer in the vocabulary of the clauses of the text, Winter argues, which he demonstrates in analyses of short texts from newspaper articles, advertisements or captions of cartoons. Although his goal is to account for contextual meaning and the communicative value of his clauses, he does not look at the context in its fully pragmatic perspectives. He insists on considering his framework semantic, and claims that the comprehension of a text is possible through rigorous parsing and understanding the meaning relationships between clauses. Winter speaks of ‘know’ and ‘think’ information, which he interprets as a basic text relationship in terms of his larger clause relation of situation and evaluation, “where the situation element represents ‘know’ and the evaluation element represents ‘think’ ” (1982: 196). He identifies the relationship between the two as members of a semantic relationship in the following way:

... where we do not have facts or ‘know’ information, *situation* becomes hypothetical situation, and the evaluation element has to investigate the possibility of finding the true situation, with the purpose of converting hypothetical situation to real situation (Winter 1982: 196).

For the purposes of analysis, Winter abbreviates the hypothetical situation to *hypothetical member*, and the real for him means ‘evaluating what is true’ (ibid.: 196 – 197).

This kind of cognitive relationship has been explored in an empirical study in the comprehension of scientific writing, too, by Allison (1991). Her paper is concerned with the issue from pedagogical perspectives giving a report on problems of readers of English as a second language in terms of identifying the ‘Hypothetical – Real’ contrast. Allison’s objective is to investigate the relationship between explicitness and pragmatic inferencing; she is concerned with relations between features of discourse and inferential tendencies of readers and whether greater ‘explicitness’ in textual signalling of the relation increases the ‘effectiveness’ of discourses for readers. Allison’s conclusion is that in the case of her target readers inferential problems with the examined discourse relation are widespread but she also implies that language proficiency and subject knowledge seem to be crucial factors.

My data provide evidence that the emergence of the cognitive schema of Hypothetical – Real is not uncommon in natural conversations. A number of examples show that hypothetical statements occurring in initiation moves can imply the speaker’s uncertainty about an issue partly or wholly unknown to him – in Winter’s terms such statements contain ‘think’ information –, and that such linguistic behaviour typically induces a response in which the partner either confirms the proposition in the hypothesis as true, i.e. accepts it as real, or, on the contrary, rejects it as not true. The implicature of such utterances is the following: “*Am I right to think that p?*”

Speaker A in situation (6) quoted above could have said: *Am I right to think that you have just been made redundant?* Similarly, in dialogue (9) the interaction could have started as follows:

*Judith, am I right to think that broadly speaking, women get paid between two thirds and three quarters of the income of their male counterparts?* From this it follows necessarily that the communicative function of a Hypothetical in an initiation move corresponds to that of a yes / no interrogative form: *Have you just been made*

*redundant?* or *Do women get paid between two thirds and three quarters...?* in (6) and (9) respectively.

The lexicalizations of non-fact modality signalling the speaker's assumption and thus a Hypothetical act in the data are numerous; for the possibly true or for the necessarily true speakers typically select inherently irrealis verbs – *gather, seem, understand, take, hope*, etc. –, inferential adverbs like *so*, e.g., and modal/ attitudinal adverbs such as *presumably, obviously, clearly*. Starting from the analytic principle of markedness I presume that utterances that have such modal elements are the unmarked forms of hypotheses, while those not containing any lexicalization of such a meaning, in certain contexts can have the potential function of a Hypothetical, which I consider marked, and term zero-marked. The meaning of zero-marked Hypotheticals is inferred from the context. Extracts (11) and (12) below are further examples of unmarked hypothesis in the initiation move:

- (11) A: ***So*** there are no drums in there at all.  
 B: No. It's it's the idea is to, well, it's been happening for hundreds of years, of course, composers have written the rhythm into the orchestra inheritally. ....
- (12) A: ***Presumably***, the the sort of glamour of films, and how you create an effect on films got itself into your brain in those very early days.  
 B: Well, it must do, because I did see them over and over, I mean, when you you know, you buy films, or there's nothing else to hire, you know, you do tend to do that. But

A's inferential hypothesis based on his familiarity with the topic of the conversation in both extracts evokes the Hypothetical – Real schema complemented by a third member: the Reason. The following table is a summary of the cognitive patterns creating coherence in discourse exchanges (11) and (12):

Exchange	Hypothetical member (speaker A)	Real member (speaker B)	Reason for reality (speaker B)
(11)	<b><i>So</i></b> there are no drums in there at all.	No	composers have written the rhythm into the orchestra
(12)	<b><i>Presumably</i></b> , the the sort of glamour of films... got itself into your brain	Well, it must do (?)	<b>because</b> I did see them over and over

**Table 1**

Whether there truly is a Real element in extract (12) just like in (11) has to be assessed in terms of the communicative value of the response, especially that of the modal auxiliary *must*. In the following I will argue, that the auxiliary *must* in this particular context has a dual meaning, for it can be interpreted along two different lines. Hence in the current speech situation *it must do* in B's response means *yes*.

Notwithstanding its non-factive meaning, when used to refer to logical conclusions revealing the speaker's epistemic state, *must* signals certainty, i.e. personal knowledge of a case, which in our context in (12) above means the approval of the first speaker's hypothesis, a strong probability – *the sort of glamour of films ... got itself into your brain*

– as true. So much the more likely is it that *must* implicates ‘yes, *it did*’ that B’s lexicalization ‘*it must do*’ is supported by its immediate linguistic context, the reason following – *because I did see them over and over* –, which is given particular emphasis via the auxiliary *did*.

Looking at it from another perspective we have to note that due to the Reason element ‘*because I did see them over and over*’ we get some instances of reality in the speaker’s life, which can be understood as a force influencing the state of mind of the individual involved. In this approach *must* means compulsion, i.e. the force of the circumstances in the life of speaker B.

I assume that in this context the two possible meanings of *must* merge, and this allows for an interpretation of the presence of an implicit Real element in the response.

### 5.4 The Unspecific lexical unit in a Hypothetical utterance

The first speaker occasionally elicits information by using a noun phrase with a general meaning. The concept referred to by such discourse units is expected to be specified by the conversational partner, as it happens in the following three interactions.

In extract (13) the same Hypothetical – Real pattern can be recognized as in exchanges (6) – (12) above, but here it merges with the Unspecific – Specific schema. The hypothetical contextual inference of speaker A about women’s commitment is followed by B’s own interpretation of the concept of commitment:

- (13) A: You see, a couple of callers so far’ve used the word *commitment*, so women *must have* a real *commitment* to these careers which, **clearly**, you have.  
 B: You have to. You have to prove it’s not so much that you have to prove yourself better than the men, but you have to prove your commitments that you will stay at it, you will not run away and become pregnant, or, you know, become very emotional at every little outburst, you have to say I’ve got to be tough. You have to become one of the lads.

The conceptual schemas of the interaction can be summarized as follows:

	<b>Hypothetical</b>	<b>Unspecific</b>
Speaker A:	<i>so women must have</i>	<i>a real commitment</i>
	↑ <i>clearly you have</i>	↑
Speaker B:	<b>Real</b>	<b>Specific</b>
	you have to you have to prove	that you will stay at it, you will not run away and become pregnant, or become very emotional at every little outburst, I’ve got to be tough. you have to say you have to become one of the lads

Table 2

In the following dialogue the Real member consists of the specification of certain incidents listed by the second speaker as a response to the first speaker's assumption:

- (14) A: *I gather* you had **problems** getting getting back into the country last night.  
 B: We got back fairly late 'nd got held up for an hour at Heathrow waiting for luggage because some of the security people thought that the Archbishop's cross was a machine gun. So that kept us waiting.

It is most probable that in this context a short response like “*Yes, we did*” accepting A's hypothesis would not have satisfied the first speaker. Such a response would have been naturally followed by a query about the details: “*And what were the problems?*” The communicative effect of A's hypothesis in this utterance is due to the contextual unspecificness of the meaning of the noun *problem*. The following table demonstrates two cognitive schemas organizing the exchange, the Hypothetical – Real and the Unspecific – Specific, with their linguistic realization:

	Hypothetical	Unspecific
Speaker A:	<i>I gather</i>	you had <b>problems</b>
	<b>Real =</b>	<b>= Specific</b>
Speaker B:	We got back fairly late	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•got held up for an hour at Heathrow</li> <li>•some of the security people thought that the Archbishop's cross was a machine gun</li> <li>•that kept us waiting</li> </ul>

**Table 3**

As the table reveals, the hypothetical utterance of speaker A is lexically signalled (*I gather*), while the real member of the Hypothetical – Real relationship – B's response – is lexically unmarked. The Real constituent of the schema is realized through the specification of the problem via the factive meaning of the verbs describing the events in past tense. It is also implied in the chart that this reality is conceptually related to the unspecific general noun *problems*. Unlike those elicitive moves where the speaker's hypothesis is explicitly signalled by the lexicalizations *so*, *must*, *clearly*, and *I gather* – cf. extracts (13) and (14) respectively –, in extract (15) there is no signal of the hypothetical meaning:

15. A: But it’s particularly *a problem* if the person who is under hypnosis has been told to deny that he or she is under hypnosis by the hypnotist.

B: Oh, yes. This is a terrible problem, because the unscrupulous hypnotist puts up blockages and and in-programmes the the subject he is abusing, first of all not to be hypnotisable by anyone else, and then, if the person should be hypnotised by someone else not to remember various things, and there are various cases where it took years for the deep-programming hypnotists to unscramble the mess made by the unscrupulous hypnotists over many years. ..

In accordance with what has been said about markedness regarding hypothetical acts, I consider the first speaker’s utterance in (15) above a marked Hypothetical. I propose that the Hypothesis is zero-marked here, notwithstanding there is double signalling of speaker A’s intention to ask for an explanation. The introductory *but* functions as a pragmatic marker implicating some kind of contradiction in the subject matter of the discourse which has to be explained, and the evaluative noun *problem* also calls for specification. Relying on the mental construct of the context the addressee in the extract makes a selection for a relevant meaning and his response allows for the assumption that the same cognitive pattern is in effect in the discourse as was identified above in Tables 2 and 3. Besides the zero-marked Hypothetical – Real a second cognitive schema evolves in the exchange, the Unspecific – Specific, which is realized by the specification of the unspecific concept *a problem* by the expert, speaker B, in the form of the Reason why certain kinds of hypnosis are a particular problem. The Reason, is involved in the conceptual schema of the following extract, too:

16. A: *So*, from a sheer protectionist point of view **you fear a unification.**

B: I feel the present war is a trade war; it’s not a war with with weapons like we used to have in history.

In the exchange the host of the call-in programme – back in 1989 – refers to a possible unification of East Germany and West Germany, which, in his Hypothetical move is implicated to be a problem for the caller, speaker B. The host’s hypothesis entails the concept of *problem*, which is implicated by the verb *fear*. A’s words are understood as “*What’s your problem with it?*” or “*Why do you fear a unification?*”. In his response B gives the Reason why he fears, and the Reason itself is equal to the Specification of the Problem. The cognitive schemas which make the discourse coherent can be demonstrated as follows:


	Hypothetical		Unspecific Problem
Speaker A:	<i>so</i> <i>you fear</i>		<i>unification</i>
Speaker B:	<i>the present war is a trade war; it’s not a war with weapons like we used to have in history</i>		

Table 4

## 5.5 The Problem – Solution schema

Logic demands that problems have solutions. This assumption can work in discourse as a principle channelling the interpretation of the speaker's communicative intention in the right direction, and controlling the response. When the first speaker refers to a problem, it can be interpreted as inquiry about the solution, as it happens in the following extract:

17. A: The *trouble* is that the only way of coming back at you is by coming back at you with the very which is your stick really, the stick of the Law.

B: *We have rules* which govern the way that we conduct our affairs and also the affairs of our clients. And if we breach any of those particular rules then we are liable to be disciplined. By the Law Society. ....

The relevance of the response in (17) is due to the so-called Problem – Solution pattern, which is a common organizing configuration in written discourse as Winter (1994) and Hoey (1994) point out. My data clearly show that the same schema can arch over the initiation and the response moves in interactional discourse realizing conceptual coherence. The explicit lexical signals of the schema in the above dialogue are the following:

	<b>Problem</b>
Speaker A:	<i>trouble</i> the only way of coming back at you is by coming back at you with the stick of the Law
	<b>Solution</b>
Speaker B:	<i>We have rules</i>

Table 5

## 6. Conclusions

There is empirical evidence that in a certain cognitive environment non-interrogative utterances can have the same discourse potentials as yes/no interrogatives or wh-interrogatives. The interpretation of initiations containing a Hypothetical or an Unspecified linguistic unit is pragmatically motivated by schemas mutually accessible in the cognitive environment of the participants. Such commonly occurring patterns as the Hypothetical – Real, the Unspecific – Specific or the Problem – Solution can be accomplished in discourse via the addressee's response, and one interchange can comprise more than one of these cognitive schemas. Clearly, a relevance theoretic approach to discourse exchanges can prove that conversational "cooperativeness" in discourse is cognitively grounded.

For the occasional inexplicitness of form in Elicitations in talk radio programmes two plausible reasons can be proposed. On the one hand, such linguistic choices by the host of the programme are very likely to be motivated by politeness, on the other hand, he may also have stylistic considerations with the intention to avoid the monotony of Question – Answer exchanges, which, otherwise, in the light of the goal of the programme, would appear linguistically more palpable.

Despite the specific genre from which the data come and its specific socio-cultural features it seems sensible to assume that in many other kinds of natural conversation the same phenomena are observable, and that the forms of indirectness and inexplicitness intended for elicitation are common in any type of discourse.

## References

- Allison, D. 1991. “Textual explicitness and pragmatic inferencing: The case of ‘Hypothetical – Real’ contrasts in written instructional scientific discourse in English.” *Journal of Pragmatics* 15: 373-393.
- Carston, R. 2002. “Linguistic Meaning, Communicated Meaning and Cognitive Pragmatics.” *Mind and Language* 17 (1&2): 127–148.
- Carston, R. 2004. “Explicature and Semantics.” In *Semantics: A Reader*, S. Davis & B. Gillon (eds), 817-845. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Coupland, J. 1986. Writing texts: Cohesion in scientific and technical writing. In *Common ground: Shared interest in ESP and communication studies, ELT Documents 117*. R. Williams, J. Swales and J. Kirkman (eds), 55-62. Oxford: Pergamon.
- Grice, H. P. 1975. “Logic and conversation.” In *Syntax and Semantics Volume 3 Speech Acts*, Peter Cole and Jerry L. Morgan (eds), 41 – 58. New York, San Francisco, London: Academic Press.
- Herczeg-Deli, Á. 2009a. “Interactive knowledge in dialogue.” In *Kalba ir kontekstai III (1) Language in Different Contexts. Research papers 2009 Volume III (1)*, Račienė, E. et al. (eds), 103-111. Vilnius: Vilnius Pedagogical University.
- Herczeg-Deli, Á. 2009b. “A Cognitive Pragmatic Review of Natural Discourse.” In *Eger Journal of English Studies Vol. IX*, Éva Antal & Csaba Czeplédi (eds), 61-78. Eger: EKF Líceum Kiadó.
- Hoey, M. 1983. *On the Surface of Discourse*. London: George Allen & Unwin.
- Hoey, M. 1994. “Signalling in discourse.” In *Advances in Written Text Analysis*, Coulthard, M. (ed.), 26-45. London & New York: Routledge.
- Ochs, E. 1979. “Planned and unplanned discourse.” In *Syntax and semantics vol.12. Discourse and Syntax*, Givón, T. (ed.), 51 – 80. New York: Academic Press.
- Searle, J. R. 1975. “Indirect speech acts.” In *Syntax and Semantics Volume 3 Speech Acts*, Peter Cole and Jerry L. Morgan (eds), 59 – 82. New York: Academic Press.
- Sperber, D. and D. Wilson. 1986. *Relevance: Communication and Cognition*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Sperber, D. and D. Wilson. 1995. *Relevance: Communication and Cognition*. Oxford: Blackwell.

- Stubbs, M. 2001. "On inference theories and code theories: Corpus evidence for semantic schemas." *Text* 21(3): 437-65.
- van Dijk, Teun A. 1977. *Text and context*. London: Longman.
- van Dijk, Teun A. 2006. "Discourse, context and cognition." *Discourse Studies* 8(1): 159-177.
- Wilson, D. and D. Sperber. 1993. "Linguistic form and relevance." *Lingua* 90: 1-25.
- Wilson, D. & D. Sperber. 2004. "Relevance Theory." In *The Handbook of Pragmatics*, L. Horn & G. Ward (eds), 607-632. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Winter, E. 1982. *Towards a Contextual Grammar of English. The Clause and its Place in the Definition of Sentence*. London: George Allen & Unwin.
- Winter, E. O. 1992. „The Notion of Unspecific versus Specific as one Way of Analysing the Information of a Fund-Raising Letter.” In *Discourse Description. Diverse linguistic analyses of a fund-raising text*, Mann, W.C. and Thompson, Sandra A. (eds), 131-170. Amsterdam / Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Winter, E. 1994. "Clause Relations and Information Structure: Two Basic Text Structures in English." In *Advances in Written Text Analysis*, Coulthard, M. (ed.). 46-68. London & New York: Routledge.

#### About the Author

**Herczeg-Deli Ágnes** graduated from Lajos Kossuth University Debrecen, Hungary with MA degrees in English and Russian (1978), and holds a doctorate from the Department of General and Applied Linguistics of the same university. In 1989 she spent a semester in the School of English at the University of Birmingham, England, doing research in text, discourse and discourse intonation. In 1995 she returned to Birmingham for a short-term research in the Collins Cobuild Centre. She is currently affiliated with the English Studies Department of Eszterházy Károly College, Eger, Hungary, where she teaches English syntax and semantics, rhetoric, communication, text linguistics and discourse analysis. Her recent research interests are primarily in the impact of the cognitive context on meaning, discourse functions and processes, prosodic aspects of elicitations, cognitive and interpersonal processes in written text and rhetoric in advertising.