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Linguistic Underspecificity: The Case of English Verbs

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### Z á s a d y p r o v y p r a c o v á n í :

The main objective of the current paper is to demonstrate on selected English verbs from the television reality show *Come Dine with Me* the existence of the phenomenon of linguistic underspecificity. Adopting the relevance-theoretic approach to verbal communication, it is suggested that a word's meaning content is linguistically underspecified, as it is conceptual in nature and created through a linguistic form encoding a schema for such meaning construction. Accordingly, the thesis begins with an outline of two theories on verbal communication, the Cooperative Principle and Relevance Theory. Subsequently, the notion of a propositional form is introduced, followed by a discussion of explicit utterance content. After that, the nature of word meaning is dealt with, which offers the diverging perspectives of truth-conditional semantics, lexical semantics, pragmatics, and a psychologically-based approach to word meaning. Consequently, the analytic part first describes the reality show in which the phenomenon was investigated, and then the analysis of the claims proposed in the theoretical part proceeds. The whole paper is concluded with final remarks and suggestions.

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Souhlasím s prezenčním zpřístupněním své práce v Univerzitní knihovně.

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## **Annotation**

The current paper focuses on the phenomenon of linguistic underspecificity found with selected English verbs from the television reality show *Come Dine with Me*. The theoretical part is introduced by two key approaches to human communication, which is followed by characterisation of a propositional form and explicit utterance content. The last part of the theory provides divergent accounts on word meaning. The analytic part consequently explores the ideas put forward in the theoretical part, especially the thesis of linguistic underspecificity, investigated with respect to selected verbs from the television show.

## **Keywords**

underspecificity, meaning, concept, verb, proposition, linguistic prompt

## **Anotace**

Tato práce se zabývá jevem jazykové podurčenosti u vybraných anglických sloves v televizní reality show *Come Dine with Me*. V části teoretické jsou nejprve představeny dva klíčové přístupy k lidské komunikaci, které následuje charakteristika nositele výroku a popis explicitního obsahu věty. V poslední podkapitole jsou porovnány rozdílné náhledy na slovní význam. Praktická část je pak zaměřená na tvrzení z teoretické části, především na tezi jazykové podurčenosti, která jsou zkoumána u vybraných sloves z reality show.

## **Klíčová slova**

podurčenost, význam, koncept, sloveso, výrok, jazykový ukazatel

## Table of contents

<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>1. Verbal communication .....</b>	<b>10</b>
1.1. The Cooperative Principle.....	10
1.2. Relevance Theory.....	11
<b>2. What is said when something is said .....</b>	<b>16</b>
2.1. Propositional form: sentence, utterance, thought.....	16
2.2. What is explicitly said.....	19
<b>3. The nature of word meaning.....</b>	<b>23</b>
3.1. Word meaning in linguistic terms .....	23
3.2. Pragmatic context and conceptual word meaning.....	26
3.3. Conceptual word meaning in relevance-driven communication.....	28
<b>4. Analysis .....</b>	<b>36</b>
4.1. <i>Come Dine with Me</i> .....	37
4.2. On truth-conditional semantics .....	38
4.3. On lexical semantics .....	42
4.4. On linguistic underspecificity of English verbs .....	47
4.5. On potential consequences in human communication .....	57
4.6. Summary of the analytic part .....	59
<b>5. Conclusion.....</b>	<b>61</b>
<b>6. Resumé .....</b>	<b>62</b>
<b>7. Bibliography .....</b>	<b>66</b>
<b>8. Appendix.....</b>	<b>69</b>



## Introduction

Not that long ago, it was believed that the meaning of linguistic elements was best characterised by a finite set of semantic components. A remarkable turn of events came with the works of Grice (1957) and Grice (1975), and with it an appeal for reconsideration of the old views, with an emphasis on the significance of utterance context and the intentions of a speaker in word-meaning construction. Through the proposal that some such meaning indescribable in dictionary-like terms or semantic features is part of what is indirectly implied, not of what is said through linguistic means, the argument has culminated into the suggestion of explaining a word's meaning content in use in relation to the mental entities of concepts. What of the conceptual material words are associated with, however, and if conceptual at all, has recently been discussed.

On these grounds, the main objective of the current paper is to demonstrate the thesis of linguistic underspecificity on selected English verbs occurring in the reality show *Come Dine with Me*. It is mainly attempted to further pursue the concluding ideas of Carston (2012) that linguistic elements might be thought of as encoding schemas for inferentially-based construction of a corresponding concept, which would have an impact on the obligatoriness of inferential pragmatic processes and ad-hoc construction of a word's conceptual content.

The present paper is divided into a theoretical and an analytic part. First of all, the theoretical part briefly outlines two major approaches to verbal communication, namely the Cooperative Principle and Relevance Theory. The level of explicit utterance content is subsequently approached, the discussion of which is opened with the delineation of what constitutes a propositional form. The principal chapter on word meaning then follows, offering such perspectives as truth-conditional semantics, lexical semantics, relevance-theoretic pragmatics, and contextualist pragmatics. The analysis consequently attempts to demonstrate on selected verbs found in the reality show the suggestions provided in the theoretical part. Beginning with a brief description of the programme, this part then analyses selected verbs with respect to several tenets proposed by truth-conditional semantics and lexical semantics, demonstrating the importance of a wider, pragmatic context in interpreting word meaning. The major part of the thesis centres on linguistic underspecificity proposed for the English verbs presented, adopting the relevance-theoretic comprehension process in communication. After that, a reflection on possible effects of such a hypothesis is provided. Lastly, the analytic part is summarised and several concluding remarks are offered in the final chapter. The list of the verbal tokens used in the analysis is enclosed at the end of the paper.

# 1. Verbal communication

It seems convenient to start a thesis on word meaning by describing the process of the human-specific behaviour during which such a notion gains particular value. Accordingly, two main approaches to verbal communication will be dealt with in the following subchapters, namely the Cooperative Principle and Relevance Theory respectively. It needs to be noted that each approach will be outlined solely with reference to the separate works in which the respective theories originated, and in which the theories are most developed, since they serve merely as a premise for the discussion of word-meaning construction that will occur later in the paper.

## 1.1. The Cooperative Principle

To resolve the disputes of philosophers over the kind of expression meaning that stems in “the inappropriateness of its application in certain sorts of situation” (Grice 1989, 20), Grice (1975/1989)<sup>1</sup> offers what he terms the Cooperative Principle. Hidden behind the imperative “[m]ake 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” (1975/1989, 26), there is rather an idea of a rationale-driven natural behaviour that human beings exhibit; it is a principle of verbal communication according to which interlocutors participating in a discourse co-operate to achieve a shared goal, and which will include an appropriate and discard inappropriate manner of talk. (1975/1989, 26) In compliance with the Cooperative Principle, speakers are said to adhere to four categories of maxims and sub-maxims, summarised below:

**QUANTITY:**

1. Make your contribution as informative as is required (for the current purposes of the exchange).
2. Do not make your contribution more informative than is required.

**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 adequate evidence.

**RELATION:** Be relevant.

**MANNER:** Be perspicuous.

1. Avoid obscurity of expression.
2. Avoid ambiguity.
3. Be brief (avoid unnecessary prolixity).
4. Be orderly.

(Grice 1975/1989, 26-27)

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<sup>1</sup> Following the practice of Carston (2002), whenever a reference to Grice (1989) is made, which is a collection of his papers, the year of the work referred to is also included, although page numbering corresponds to Grice (1989).

The Cooperative Principle and the maxims are aimed primarily to tentatively characterise the natural behaviour of the participants engaged in (not only) verbal communication, but they also serve to explain a certain type of meaning that is conversationally implicated (1975/1989, 26) and that could not be accessed from what is said. (1975/1989, 24) A detailed account of what conversational implicatures are is beyond the scope of the current paper. Nevertheless, the notion roughly approximates the one put forward by Sperber and Wilson (1995), which will be dealt with in the following section.

Meanwhile, despite being a pioneering work in the attempt to shed some light on verbal interaction, there are drawbacks in the feasibility of the “conversational practice...*reasonable* for us to follow”. (1975/1989, 29) First of all, the maxims may not be sufficient in terms of fully capturing the nature of verbal communication, for, as Grice (1975/1989) acknowledges, other precepts might need to be included to allow for any socio-cultural aspects not covered by the maxims. (1975/1989, 28) Furthermore, the principles appear to be vaguely defined, especially the maxim of Relation, whose fluidity seems to be challenged by the author himself (cf. 1975/1989, 30), and the category of Manner, within which the sub-maxims are likely to be susceptible to a fair degree of subjectivity. For instance, what may be thought brief by the speaker need not necessarily be thought brief by the hearer, and vice versa. Lastly, Sperber and Wilson (1995) propose that the conversational rules offered in Grice (1975/1989) were primarily aimed to clarify the meanings of logical connectors and to reduce the load of linguistic semantics in explaining intangible meaning in terms of implicatures. Hence, Grice’s theory, the authors continue, introduces the concept of communication based on inference of such implicatures, which, however, should be revised in more “psychologically realistic terms”. (1995, 37-38) Accordingly, Sperber and Wilson (1995) propose a more developed theory, outlined in the next part.

## **1.2. Relevance Theory**

As suggested, Relevance Theory is a psychologically-possible, cognitively-based approach to human communication that is, nevertheless, as Sperber and Wilson (1995) put it, “governed by a less-than-perfect heuristic.” (1995, 45) The theory is built on the notion of relevance and two principles, namely the Cognitive and Communicative Principle, which will be gradually unfolded in this section.

To begin with, apparently alluding to Grice’s principle and maxims, Sperber and Wilson (1995) suggest that speakers wittingly interact in a way that is in accordance with certain conversational principles, and hearers, knowing that all interlocutors follow such guidelines,

are consequently left with those interpretations of linguistic stimuli, of utterances, conceivable in the exchange. (1995, 13-14) What is thought of as conceivable is restricted by a hearer's 'context'<sup>2</sup>, a mental assembly of "assumptions about the world." (1995, 15) The context consists of the ongoing discourse and the real, tangible context, but more importantly, the hearer's "expectations about the future, scientific hypotheses or religious beliefs, anecdotal memories, general cultural assumptions, [and] beliefs about the mental state of the speaker". (1995, 15-16) To secure an appropriate utterance interpretation, it is incumbent upon the speaker to estimate the ability of the hearer to arrive at the right context against which her<sup>3</sup> utterance is to be understood, and construct the utterance accordingly. (1995, 43) At the same time, the hearer must be able to select the right context for a proper interpretation of the utterance. (1995, 16) For these reasons, the hearer and the speaker need to share a context.

By way of explanation of how a context is shared, due to discrepancies amongst interlocutors in the operation of perceptual and cognitive capacities, people diverge in conceptualising the reality and ergo inference processes, and thus create distinct 'cognitive environments'. Such an environment consists of "a set of facts that are manifest" (1995, 39) to a person, where a fact being manifest indicates that the person "is capable...of representing it mentally and accepting its representation as true or probably true" (1995, 39) at the given time. The overall cognitive environment includes not only facts but all assumptions, which one is conscious of or might be conscious of, that are present to the individual in that situation via inference or perception. (1995, 38-39) When engaged in communication, interlocutors are said to have a common cognitive environment, which is a merger of their respective cognitive environments including all the assumptions representable that are manifest to the respective interlocutors. More crucially, given the discrepancies in perceiving the context and in cognition, it is not possible for the participants to have a full common cognitive environment. That is to say, it is only possible, but not definite, to have identical assumptions. Consequently, it must be known to all the participants within a particular situation that the others also share the cognitive environment, thus establishing a 'mutual cognitive environment' with assumptions that are 'mutually manifest'. (1995, 41-42)

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<sup>2</sup> Single inverted commas are used throughout the paper to signalise terms from other works that need to be included in their original, non-reworded form.

<sup>3</sup> The convention of establishing a hearer as male and a speaker as female is adopted from Sperber and Wilson (1995).

As for assumptions, amongst the innumerable assumptions a hearer entertains, there are some that seem to be more valid than others in the ongoing discourse, and so, to filter out the assumptions, Sperber and Wilson (1995) provide the criterion of relevance. (1995, 46) An assumption is judged relevant on the basis of ‘processing effort’ and ‘contextual effects’; the relevance of an assumption decreases with an increase in the cognitive endeavour pursued to achieve contextual effects, (1995, 124) but, at the same time, increases with the increase of the latter. (1995, 119) To clarify the notion of contextual effects, Sperber and Wilson (1995) claim that human cognition is driven by efficiency “at improving the individual’s knowledge of the world” through collecting new facts, which is considered the main direction human cognition takes. To increase the efficiency of human cognition, a moment-to-moment efficiency goal is to estimate what information is the most appropriate to increase the overall cognitive efficiency. It is the combination of old, already known information and related new information that gives rise to additional novel facts and assumptions, and it is consequently this accumulation process that improves a person’s knowledge about the world, which is in turn the criterion to regard the related new piece of information as relevant. (1995, 47-48) The accumulated information thus amounts to contextual effects, one of which is a ‘contextual implication’. A contextual implication is an inferred piece of information embedded in a certain context of old assumptions on which it is congruent, but derivable only by the combination suggested above. (1995, 107-108) So, for instance, the old information in (1) that Hugh might represent interacts with the new information provided by Adele’s utterance in (2), the combination of which gives rise to the possible implication that Adele intends to express, offered in (3):

- (1) Adele is depressed that she is single at the moment.
- (2) Hugh: *Sooner or later, you’ll find the right one. Don’t worry.*  
Adele: *I love people who think soothing can replace a man!*
- (3) I don’t want you to soothe me.

A full account of implicatures and contextual effects is, however, beyond the scope of the paper.

With respect to what was said above, the authors propose a principle called ‘the Cognitive Principle (of Relevance)’, maintaining that “[h]uman cognition tends to be geared to the maximisation of relevance.” (1995, 260) Significantly related to the principle is the idea of ‘ostension’, defined as “behaviour which makes manifest an intention to make something manifest”. (1995, 49) Ostensive communication, labelled ‘ostensive-inferential communication’, is a process crucially involving a speaker’s communicative intention to make manifest her informative intention. (1995, 54) That is, an informative intention is the intention

to make certain assumptions more or less manifest and thus change the hearer's cognitive environment. (1995, 58-9) In the example above, the assumption that Adel wants to make more or less manifest can be in the form of the implicature *I don't want you to soothe me*. A communicative intention is the intention to "make it mutually manifest to audience and communicator that the communicator has this informative intention." (1995, 61) Thus, in case of the utterance above, Adel intends to make it mutually manifest that she does not need to be soothed. Surely, human beings communicate predominantly, although not exclusively, through utterances. Accordingly, as Sperber and Wilson (1995) maintain, for an utterance to be regarded as an ostensive stimulus, it must direct the hearer's attention on the intentions of the speaker. (1995, 153) As mentioned above, human cognition is geared at the most relevant information, and so the speaker, when producing an ostensive stimulus, needs to make manifest to the hearer that her utterance is relevant. (1995, 156) Since an ostensive stimulus discloses the intentions behind the act of ostension to the hearer, the stimulus thus presupposes its own relevance. (1995, 157-158) Additionally, for an ostensive stimulus to create not only a presumption of relevance but also to be optimally relevant, it must be "relevant enough for it to be worth the addressee's effort to process it" and "the most relevant one compatible with the communicator's abilities and preferences." (1995, 270) To capture this phenomenon, Sperber and Wilson (1995) propose 'the Communicative Principle (of Relevance)', which reads: "Every act of ostensive communication communicates a presumption of its own optimal relevance." (1995, 260)

As a result of the process just characterised, Sperber and Wilson (1995) argue that the first understanding of the ostensive stimulus uttered that the hearer arrives at on the basis of the meaning its elements carry, and that is, moreover, in accordance with the Communicative Principle of Relevance, is the most fitting one. (1995, 178) It needs to be noted that using language is not to be equated with communication. According to Sperber and Wilson (1995), communication can be achieved without using a linguistic code providing that the speaker's intentions behind the act of ostensive behaviour are identified. (1995, 25) Ostensive-inferential communication without a code, however, is inferentially unlimited; there is an indefinite range of assumptions that might be derived. Although a coded signal provides "abstract mental structures which must be inferentially enriched before they can be taken to represent anything of interest" (1995, 174), as will be discussed in Section 2.2., it is nonetheless an overt means to restrict information processing and possible inferences. (1995, 174-175)

In conclusion, given its purpose to settle the arguments of language philosophers, Grice's Cooperative Principle with the conversational maxims appears to be far from providing a solid

ground for capturing the nature of verbal communication, which is consequently reflected in the obscurity of the principles and their insufficient psychological plausibility. On the contrary, the relevance-theoretic comprehension heuristic seems to come nearer in explaining such communication by grounding it in the notion of relevance, the Communicative Principle and Cognitive Principle, and will be thus embraced in the analytic part as the background against which the arguments regarding word meaning will be developed. Since human communication depends largely on language, the next chapter will elaborate on what sentences reflect and what is their explicit content.

## 2. What is said when something is said

Having outlined the approaches to human communication, the issue of what is really said when an utterance is made will be now discussed, incorporating ideas advocated by truth-conditionalists, contextualists, Grice as a minimalist, and relevance theorists. First of all, the notion of proposition and in what form it occurs will be considered, followed by characterisation of the explicit level of an utterance.

### 2.1. Propositional form: sentence, utterance, thought

Historically speaking, Evans and Green (2006) suggest that the truth-conditional conception of meaning originates with philosophers from Ancient Greece, arguing that a sentence is a ‘truth bearer’ whose truth is established when it reflects some condition in the reality. (2006, 446-447) In this respect, Richard Montague more recently proposed that truth-conditional evaluation could be applied to ordinary sentences to assign them meaning, gained by disclosing their logically-based formal features via “the metalanguage of predicate calculus”. (2006, 449) To demonstrate, the following was extracted from Evans and Green (2006):

- (4) a. *Jane loves Tom.*  
b.  $L(j, t)$  (Evans and Green 2006, 451)

In the formal language, natural language items are represented either as ‘constants’ or ‘predicates’. Constants, written in lower case, symbolise concrete entities, whereas predicates, in upper case, stand for processes, properties, roles and relations. Together, they form a ‘formula’. In the example above, the formula consists of the predicate  $L$ , referring to *loves* in the preceding sentence, and two constants  $j$  and  $t$ , referring to *Jane* and *Tom* respectively. (2006, 451) This process of value assignment to terms is the first stage in discovering the meaning of a sentence. In the current example, (4a) is first transferred into the predicate calculus in (4b), where the values *Jane*, *love* and *Tom* are given to the terms. Then, a model of the world is provided, which might include all people, some of whom are in the relation *love*, in which the sentence is classified true or false. To determine the truth or falsity of the sentence, matching process needs to take place, that is, suitable entities in the world model are found that correspond to the predicate calculus terms, so the formula  $L(j, t)$  is matched with particular *Jane* and *Tom* that are in love. In other words, the symbols are assigned “denotation” to arrive at the overall “denotation” of the sentence. Lastly, the truth condition of (4a) is determined with regard to the model, where, the match having been found, the natural language sentence is



consequently true. In short, natural language sentences in general, and the one in (4a) in particular, derive their meaning from their being true, based on the truth condition in the model of the world that the sentence reflects and that the proposition realised by the formula represents. (2006, 452-455) However, Evans and Green (2006) maintain that it is not the real, existing truth that is sought, but potential truth, that is, such truth arrived at via the conditions that would need to occur in a modelled world. (2006, 364) In this way, traditional truth-conditional approaches evaluate truth on the basis of “an objective external reality”, which results in the possibility to capture the meaning of a sentence by a formal language. (2006, 171-172) Such tenets of the formal approach, however, has found its opponents, particularly in the field of pragmatics.

First of all, Recanati (2004) offers the perspective of contextualists, who claim that the bearer of a proposition or, in Recanati’s terms, a thought communicated that could be accordingly truth-evaluated is a sentence expressing some communicative force with respect to the particular context. (2004, 83) Contextualists refuse the split between the literal, sentence meaning and speaker’s meaning in truth evaluation, and insist that the former be inevitably affected by the latter. That there is a difference between the former and the latter is acknowledged, but either of them depends on pragmatic processes (see Section 2.2.). (2004, 3-4) Therefore, it is necessary to establish a ‘situation’ on the basis of which the truth of an utterance is determined, where the situation may consist of one or more elements, for example, times, locations, possible worlds, and even agents or common items. A sentence that is the means for expressing an utterance is propositional in a restricted sense, that is, relative to “the actual world” (2004, 123), but it is the utterance, the content of which contains the sentence and the situation (2004, 122-123), that “is a legitimate bearer of truth-value”. (2004, 128) As a consequence, Recanati (2004) claims that “the same sentence may be true relative to a situation and false relative to another one” (2004, 123), using the following example to illustrate the point in question:

(5) *Claire has a good hand.* (Recanati 2004, 124)

When the speaker utters (5) while watching a game of poker, it is true if and only if there is someone named Claire who has a good hand at that particular situation and time. But if the speaker mistakenly thinks that the person in question is Claire, and still the girl meant does play poker and has a good hand somewhere else, what is true is the sentence, for it really is true in a different situation where Claire now is and has a good hand. The utterance, however, is not true since in that particular situation, there is no Claire. (2004, 123-124) It is important to note for

what will be considered in the analysis that apart from a missing element, for instance, the place element demonstrated above, a situation may also serve to modify the meaning of the linguistic elements in a sentence. (2004, 130)

That a bearer of truth conditions is not a sentence but something different altogether is also acknowledged by relevance theorists, who offer an approach that has its foundation at the mental level. By way of explanation, Sperber and Wilson (1995) claim that communication is not contingent on a speaker and the hearer coming to have an identical thought, but it is to be achieved by modifying their shared cognitive environment, as stressed also in the previous chapter, for thoughts cannot be strictly manifested in a language. (1995, 193) In the same vein, Carston (2002) argues for the strong variant of ‘the essentialist view’, according to which thoughts, the bearers of propositions, are naturally underdetermined by their corresponding sentences, as no sentence in any language is capable of encoding the entirety of a thought. (2002, 29) Inspired by Fodor (1983) and his modular view of the mind, Sperber and Wilson (1995) suggest that the latter is divided into ‘input systems’ and ‘central systems’. (1995, 71) In terms of spoken linguistic material, the input system of linguistic decoding detects, spontaneously and mostly unintentionally, any phonetic string recognised as an utterance and decodes it into a ‘semantic representation’. (1995, 177) On the other hand, central mechanisms are inferentially-based, operating on memory and what the input systems produce (1995, 71-72), so, as regards verbal communication, the central deductive system operates on the conceptual content of “a logical or propositional form”. (1995, 83) However, since the meanings of a sentence, as Sperber and Wilson (1995) propose, are comprised of semantic representations – the number of which depends on how much indeterminate a sentence is – which in turn represent not fully-developed logical forms, semantic representations only very loosely and schematically mirror thoughts. Moreover, only after the process of decoding do semantic representations occur at the mental level as assumption schemas, from which the “propositional form” and subsequently the ‘explicatures’ (see below) are selected. (1995, 193) With reference to Sperber and Wilson (1995), Carston (2002) suggests that from a propositional schema, various propositions may be developed given a fair amount of pragmatic inference. (2002, 57) Accordingly, relevance theorists believe that there are two distinct semantics: the first involves incomplete logical forms, Mentalese forms, of stable lexically-encoded meanings, which are independent of pragmatics and not propositional, and the second semantics, beyond the grasp of linguistics, that consists in truth evaluation of propositional structures and includes the conceptual representation of a logical form enriched by pragmatic inferences. (2002, 58/99-100)

Having established the workings of truth evaluation and subsequently what the propositional form may be, the discussion will now concentrate on the explicit level of an utterance, the level of linguistic stimuli.

## 2.2. What is explicitly said

It was suggested in the previous part that semantic representations are decoded into mentally represented assumption schemas, on the basis of which an explicature is determined. The relevance-theoretic notion of explicature, which shall be shortly introduced, is suggested as a response to those who claim that sentences are bearers of propositions, as traditional truth-conditionalists do, and to those who advocate the minimalist construal of a propositional form, as Grice does.

Although a preliminary work that started the debate about differentiating between saying and implicating, Grice is now widely criticised for his conception of the truth-evaluable ‘what is said’. As Grice (1975/1989) puts it, the part of an utterance equated with what is said is “closely related to the conventional meaning of the words (the sentence)...uttered” (1975/1989, 25), and offers the following sentence to explain the idea:

(6) *He is in the grip of a vice.* (Grice 1975/1989, 25)

As for the conventional meaning of the words in (6), the sentence, when abstracted from any situation, is interpretatively inconclusive since *vice* may denote either an instrument or a moral fault. Moreover, it is not at all clear, without a specific situation and utterance time, who the referent of *he* is. Therefore, to arrive at a complete ‘what is said’, the processes of reference assignment and disambiguation need to take place. (1975/1989, 25) According to Carston (2002), Grice seems to propose that it is just the processes mentioned that are necessary to receive something fully propositional, and so appears to favour the view that only these are needed to gain “the minimal truth-conditional content of [an] utterance”. Other meaning is considered to be implicated, rather than said, and captured wholly by the maxims introduced in Subchapter 1.1. (2002, 105) Similarly, as Recanati (2004) claims, this kind of ‘Minimalism’ indicates that a context is called for merely to enrich the encoded sentence meaning to obtain a fully propositional ‘what is said’. (2004, 7) However, in contrast with Grice (1975/1989), Recanati (2004) proposes that it is the contextually-driven augmenting of a “semantic skeleton” (2004, 6), a sentence meaning, that gives rise to a propositional ‘what is said’ within the range of speaker’s meaning (2004, 6), which is, crucially, underpinned by primary pragmatic processes, such as free enrichment in its general sense. (2004, 21) A detailed account of the

primary pragmatic processes as conceived by Recanati (2004), however, is beyond the scope of the paper. Still, despite the possibility of enrichment, adding further material to a sentence is limited by its semantic frame, so “this is why the English sentence *I am French* cannot [explicitly] express the proposition that kangaroos have tails.” (2004, 6)

As for relevance theorists, Carston (2002) likewise argues that the meaning of the linguistic material in an utterance is inherently underspecified, the proposal of which the author calls ‘the underdeterminacy thesis’ (2002, 19), and further elaborates on the idea in the following way:

What is meant by this is that the linguistic semantics of the utterance, that is, the meaning encoded in the linguistic expressions used, the relatively stable meanings in a linguistic system, meanings which are widely shared across a community of users of the system, underdetermines the proposition expressed (what is said). The hearer has to undertake processes of pragmatic inference in order to work out...what proposition [the speaker] is directly expressing. (Carston 2002, 19-20)

Indeed, apart from lexical ambiguity and indefiniteness of indexicals, as illustrated in (6), Carston (2002) asserts that semantic underdeterminacy of linguistic items is reflected also in the need to fill in (inferentially) sentence constituents of a seemingly complete utterance to obtain the absolute proposition (2002, 22), as demonstrated in (7):

(7) *Paracetamol is **better**.* [than what?] (Carston 2002, 22)

It is the intrinsically underdetermined meaning of *better* that demands the item being compared to be provided in order to identify the full proposition. Furthermore, in the linguistic-underdeterminacy view, although some utterances express a complete proposition, it is presumably not the one the speaker intends, and so, again, inferential pragmatic processes are needed. (2002, 26) In other words, sometimes, establishing the scope of linguistic elements, enriching a sentence with further information, or loosening and/or narrowing the encoded meaning of a linguistic item may be required to arrive at the proposition communicated (2002, 28):

(8) *Everyone **isn't** hungry.* (Carston 2002, 24)

(9) ***Something** has happened.* (Carston 2002, 26)

(10) *I'm **tired**.* (Carston 2002, 27)

(11) *The steak is **raw**.* (Carston 2002, 27)

In (8), the negative particle might fall under the scope of *everyone* or *everyone* might fall under the scope of the negative particle, which thus gives rise to two propositional forms “*not everyone is hungry*” and “*no one is hungry*” (2002, 24); the selection depends on what the

speaker desires to express. Sentence (9) offers an example of *something*, where “enriching or adding conceptual material” seems to be demanded to avoid expressing a truism, with the sentence ultimately indicating “*something bad has happened*”. (2002, 26) In (10) and (11), the processes of narrowing and widening respectively are necessary to come to the speakers’ intended utterances. That is to say, what *tired* denotes is narrowed to represent something more precise, possibly *tired in a specific way restricted by the current undertaking*, and what *raw* stands for is loosened to encompass aspects not captured by its denotation, conceivably *very undercooked but not raw in the strict sense*. (2002, 27)

In accordance with what has just been said, Carston (2002) insists that the proposition expressed, or what is said, as characterised by philosophers of language is of no use in the comprehension heuristic as outlined by relevance theorists, given the diverse inferential pragmatic processes required to identify the proposition a speaker attempts to communicate (2002, 133), and so only logical form and explicature are distinguished at the explicit level. (2002, 182) It is for these reasons that Wilson and Sperber (1990) emphasise the importance of inferential processes operating on a logical form, the input accessed by decoding, to obtain, in the search for relevance, the proposition communicated. (1990, 101) Accordingly, Sperber and Wilson (1995) define the notion of explicature as “an assumption communicated by an utterance *U*” that “is a development of a logical form encoded by *U*.” (1995, 182) To demonstrate, Carston (2002) offers the following example of an explicature discussed in Wilson and Sperber (1981):

- (12) a. *John plays very well.*  
b. *John Murray plays the violin very well.* (Carston 2002, 118)

When the utterance (12a) is made in the situation where the speaker and the hearer attend a violin concert of John Murray, not only are the processes of meaning selection with *play* and reference establishment with *John* necessary to arrive at the complete proposition “*John Murray plays some musical instrument very well*”, but the semantic representation needs to be enriched to the extent as to deliver the proposition communicated, be it an explicature or implicature. (2002, 118-119) In this case, the speaker may simply desire the hearer to recover only the basic explicature offered in (12b) without wanting to communicate implicitly. Additionally, Carston (2002) emphasises the fact that explicatures are recognised only with propositions that are intended to be communicated. As might have been noticed along the previous lines, a proposition expressed need not be the one intended, and so it fails to be an

explicature of the utterance. (2002, 117) Nevertheless, after the discussion of word meaning, the distinction between proposition expressed and explicature becomes somewhat blurred.

To conclude the current chapter, the truth-conditionalist proposition carried by natural language sentences seems to be insufficient, as it is based on a formal language and an objective reality. Instead, it is necessary, as Recanati (2004) insists, to include a situation, where the situation is identified with respect to speaker's meaning, which makes an utterance, a form including the sentence and a situation, the bearer of true propositions. On the contrary, relevance theorists seem to believe that the proper bearers of truth, or a proposition, are thoughts. Since thoughts cannot be adequately explicated, it cannot be sentences, or sentences enriched only by reference assignment and disambiguation as Grice (1975/1989) maintains, that are fully propositional. Inferential pragmatic processes are called for to derive, from a logical form, the thought intended. Since inferential pragmatic processes operate on logical forms, which are retrieved from semantic representations composed of words, the discussion will now focus on these smaller elements and their semantic nature.

### 3. The nature of word meaning

Having proceeded from verbal communication in general to linguistic stimuli and the explicit content in particular, the discussion will now centre on the nature of word meaning. The current chapter presents a disparate collection of perspectives, namely truth-conditional semantics, lexical semantics, pragmatics, and contextualist pragmatics. Although seemingly disorderly, the views were thus selected to illustrate the move from speaking about word meaning in purely linguistic terms to constructing the content of words through the mental area of concepts.

#### 3.1. Word meaning in linguistic terms

In this section, selected approaches to word meaning are compared and contrasted, specifically truth-conditional semantics and lexical semantics, as it is these that regard word meaning as a linguistically-definable notion, separable from the context of use.

According to Evans and Green (2006), truth-conditional approaches propose that sentences derive their meanings from their parts linked by grammar. (2006, 365) The parts, words, exclude any information unrelated to the firmly-defined, context-independent linguistic core that is their due semantic content describable in terms of semantic primitives. Given the divorce between the core and the unrelated information, involving general knowledge and context-specific features, there is consequently a split between semantics and pragmatics. (2006, 171) To illustrate, the word *bachelor* is composed of the primitives [+MALE, +ADULT, -MARRIED], which are “binary” primitives that participate in characterisation of the definitional meaning “*unmarried adult male*”, but any “stereotypical connotations relating to bachelor pads, sexual conquests and dirty laundry” are excluded. (2006, 208) Moreover, the formal approach suggests that a human mind includes so-called ‘mental lexicon’, where dictionary-like definitions of words, their ‘senses’, are collected. (2006, 208-209)

As the formal approach does, Cruse (1986) also embraces the idea of there being the mental lexicon, which consists of a “relatively” (1986, 50) fixed number of ‘lexical units’ with certain instructions allowing for creation of indefinitely many units. (1986, 50) There is only one sense corresponding to one lexical unit (1986, 77), where the former enters sense relations with the senses of other lexical units, (1986, 83) but whose nature is not fully established by the relations. (1986, 49) In general, a sense is defined by Cruse (1986) on the basis of its grammatical acceptability in a selection of contexts in which it is also judged semantically adequate, and so can be thought of as comprised of the relations to all such contexts where it fulfils the two conditions of acceptability. Still, the more promising aspect of word meaning is, according to

Cruse (1986), how it is shaped by the relations to those words within a particular language that show any relevant meaning differences and similarities with the word syntagmatically and paradigmatically, where such a sense feature is termed ‘semantic trait’. (1986, 15-16) The syntagmatic and paradigmatic relations are exemplified below:

(13) ?*The lions are chirruping.*<sup>4</sup>

(14) *Arthur fed the dog/cat/?lamp-post.*

(Cruse 1986, 16)

Considering (13) first, the items *lion* and *chirrup* seem to generate an unusual syntagmatic relation because of their syntagmatic incongruity. In (14), replacing *dog* for *cat* paradigmatically does not affect the syntagmatic acceptability with respect to *fed* as does substituting *dog* for *lamp-post*, since the latter two do not have even distantly similar appropriate as well as deviant contexts of occurrence. (1986, 16)

Nevertheless, in contrast with the truth-conditional semantics as considered by Evans and Green (2006), Cruse (1986) makes it explicit that in his view, semantic traits are not “primitive, functionally discrete, universal, or drawn from a finite inventory; nor is it assumed that the meaning of any word can be exhaustively characterised by any finite set of them.” (1986, 22) Cruse (1986) asserts that his lexical semantics lies somewhere between formalists who advocate for a word with a set of distinct senses, and proponents of the argument that the possibility to break down a word into distinct senses is “illusory”. (1986, 80-81) Indeed, the author argues for the distinction between permanent, fixed senses and possible senses not yet employed (1986, 68), but later admits that the former from the latter cannot be clearly separated. (1986, 70-71) However, although Cruse (1986) makes it explicit that “the meaning of any word form is in some sense different in every distinct context in which it occurs”, it is not “the appropriate unit for lexicological purposes.” (1986, 51) The processes of ‘modulation’ and ‘contextual selection’ are offered to show a context having an impact on a lexical unit, the former process concerning indefinite possibilities in contextually-dependent alteration of one sense to highlight its trait, and the latter involving a contextually-prompted selection of diverse senses of “ambiguous” lexical items. (1986, 52) Two cases of modulation are exemplified below:

(15) *A pregnant nurse attended us.*

(16) *The car needs washing.*

(Cruse 1986, 52-53)

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<sup>4</sup> The symbol of question mark is used to indicate semantic abnormality. (1986, xi)



As for modulation, the process consists of so-called ‘demotion’ and ‘promotion’, which is illustrated in (15), where the semantic trait of *nurse*, the aspect *male*, is inevitably demoted given the preceding item *pregnant*, and the trait *female* promoted. In (16), the sense of *car* is modified as to emphasise a particular semantic trait, in this case, the exterior of the car. (1986, 52-53) As for contextual selection, the commonplace example of *bank* will suffice to demonstrate that with an ambiguous word form, different senses may be selected, which could be in this case *institution* or *land near a river*.

More essentially, when talking about a context, Cruse (1986) seems to have in mind only a linguistic context; indeed, not only does the author believe that it is possible to capture all features of a non-linguistic context by linguistic material, and also that the connection of a word to a broader context could be captured by its co-text, but Cruse (1986) insists that “the semantic properties of a lexical item are fully reflected in appropriate aspects of the relations it contracts with actual and potential contexts.” (1986, 1) Additionally, similarly to truth-conditional semantics, the author excludes general-knowledge information connected with entities in the real world and keeps semantic meaning and pragmatic meaning apart in order to provide such a systematic account of word meaning that “lends itself to generalisation”. (1986, 19-20) However, the insufficiency of linguistically-based modulation and the necessity to include the pragmatic aspect is evidenced by Clark and Clark (1979) in their study of innovative denominal verbs termed ‘contextuals’. That is, according to Clark and Clark (1979), a denotation and sense of contextuals are varying and the variation infinite, since they are context-dependent and rest with the mutual effort expended by the individuals communicating (1979, 782-783) as well as with the mutual knowledge available to them at the moment of utterance. (1979, 786) An example of a contextual, independent of its linguistic context, is the following:

- (17) *Well, this time Max has gone too far. He tried to **teapot** a policeman.*  
(Clark and Clark 1979, 786)

Considering the utterance in (17), the direct object *a policeman* does not imply anything about the potential sense of *teapot* and therefore the interpretation demands shared knowledge. In other words, there are innumerable senses expressed and hence interpretations of the utterance, depending on the context and the speaker’s judgment about what and how much knowledge is shared by the participants. The sense and denotation of *teapot* may thus vary to express, for example, “*offer a teapot to*” or “*bash a teapot over the head of*”. (1979, 786) As with the previous accounts, however, Clark and Clark (1979) indicate that the variation of a sense and

denotation comes only with contextuals, as there are “purely denotational expressions like bachelor...[with] a fixed sense and denotation.” (1979, 768)

In short, word meaning is represented either as something strictly definable and characterised by semantic primitives, or as an entity that can be delineated with respect to other words within a particular language, solely dependent on an all-encompassing linguistic context, with some variation allowed. That a linguistic context is not always sufficient is demonstrated by Clark and Clark (1979) and their contextuals. Nevertheless, it will be attempted to show in the following subchapter that it is not only contextuals that depend on a pragmatic context.

### **3.2. Pragmatic context and conceptual word meaning**

First of all, with regard to the previous accounts, Recanati (2004) provides the argument of ordinary language philosophers that the meaning a particular word carries cannot be separated from how it is utilised in a discourse. That is, “[t]he meaning of a word, insofar as there is such a thing, should rather be equated with its use-potential...[W]hat must be studied primarily is speech: the activity of saying things.” (2004, 2) In this respect, Recanati (2004) argues that ‘modulation’ of word meaning, while adopting the term from Cruse (1986), is not to be restricted merely to the influence of the linguistic material accompanying a particular word, but that the process depends on the situation words are employed in, which results in the established senses of words being narrowed, broadened, or else. (2004, 131/133) The following serves to illustrate the point in question:

(18) *Open the door.* (Recanati 2004, 93)

As Recanati (2004) maintains, for the right interpretation of (18), a suitable sense for *open* needs to be selected, since a different process of opening is involved with “doors and windows” or “eyes and wounds”. (2004, 93) Even though the co-textual information provided by the direct object *the door* seems to suffice, it may so happen that the speaker demands the door be opened with a lancet as wounds are. The sense underdeterminacy cannot be compensated by adding further linguistic material, for the recurrent phenomenon that would ensue; the material itself would merely provide more underdeterminacy. (2004, 93-94) Accordingly, as Carston (2002) does in a similar way (see Subchapter 2.2.), Recanati (2004) argues for ‘semantic underdeterminacy’ in that the semantic structure of a sentence is perceived rather as a ‘semantic schema’, containing expressions that are semantically underspecified, determinable only via the context at hand against the background of speaker’s meaning. (2004, 56-57) Moreover, semantic underdeterminacy, on the contextualist view, is something that underlies “linguistic

meaning in general” (2004, 96), for “such expressions can be found all over the place.” (2004, 58) Consequently, word-meaning formation does not rest on choosing one sense from a fixed set of senses, but on inventively developing new ones, and thus producing innumerable many senses. That is, it is not just polysemous words, as *open* above, that are thus modified. Despite the fact that polysemous words may be seen as possessing something of a meaning that makes them more susceptible to modulation, the process is not restricted to these only. In fact, since there are well-established varieties of polysemy, it is suggested that the latter is induced by modulation and not vice versa. (2004, 134-135)

In the same vein, Barsalou et al. (1993) advocates that word meaning consists of ‘sense’ and ‘reference’, the latter referring to an individual within the limits of the former, and further claims that word meaning is never co-textually as well as contextually independent. (1993, 49-50) Similarly, Evans and Green (2006) argue that word meaning is “protean in nature”, changeable with respect to a linguistic and situational context. Thus, although linguistic elements carry established encoded meanings, the context-dependent ‘pragmatic meaning’ varies. Since words can never be abstracted from either context, the authors continue, “coded meaning represents an idealisation based on the prototypical meaning that emerges from contextualised uses of words.” (2006, 112-113) Accordingly, Evans and Green (2006) propose that senses are in fact lexical concepts (2006, 78), which serve only as ‘prompts’ to retrieve a network of conceptual information from the mind. That is, lexical concepts carried by words only skeletally imitate the multifaceted nature of the system of mental concepts. (2006, 192-193) By way of explanation, concepts, according to Murphy (2002), “are the glue that holds our mental world together.” (2002, 1) Types of entities in the world are represented by concepts in the brain, and it is through these mental components that people are able to interpret the world around. When an entity of a category is encountered - for instance, a car passing by - people do not need to define anew what the thing encountered is, but with a concept created for the category – the concept CAR<sup>5</sup> for the category of cars - a person simply knows what that entity is – that it simply is a car. Crucially, a concept is built, developed and modified on the basis of such encounters, and, moreover, has an established link with “larger knowledge structures.” (2002, 1) It is thus in this respect that Barsalou et al. (1993) claims that words do not encode whole concepts, but only a small portion of the concept corresponding to a particular

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<sup>5</sup> Small capital letters are used in the paper to denote mental concepts as well as lexical concepts. The former will be distinguished from the latter explicitly on each use.

word that is employed as the sense. A concept is thus “tailored” with respect to a context-specific reference to a particular entity. To illustrate, when using the word *car* in a conversation about the speaker’s car in need of repairing, it is not the whole concept CAR that is represented, but only a set of aspects retrieved with respect to the referent in question. (1993, 51)

To conclude, that word meaning should be treated with respect to the context of use to explain for a word’s variable potential is now a widely-held belief. The treatment of word meaning in terms of concepts, on the other hand, is not that well-established a phenomenon, and even less so is the issue of how much of the conceptual content is encoded by a word. In the next part, the latter issue will be discussed in more detail with respect to the relevance-theoretic comprehension heuristic proposed earlier.

### **3.3. Conceptual word meaning in relevance-driven communication**

The current subchapter centres on word-meaning development with respect to the relevance-theoretic comprehension procedure, and also outlines the argument concerning the meaning content that words truly carry.

First of all, within the realm of relevance-theoretic accounts, Sperber and Wilson (1998) suggest that conceptual representations and concepts resemble sentences and words at the mental level, where the more or less constant conceptual components are “comparable to entries in an encyclopaedia or to permanent files in a data-base.” (1998, 184) Accordingly, Carston (2002) proposes that linguistic elements bear ‘atomic concepts’, advocating that such concepts form an indivisible unified unit with no structure based on typicality of its features or dictionary-like, definitional primitives. Instead, such a conceptual element amounts to “an address or node in memory” (2002, 321) through which the records about logical relations of the concept, its linguistic features, and related “encyclopaedic or general knowledge” are accessed. (2002, 321) As Wilson and Sperber (1995) put it, the logical information includes elimination rules carried out on the logical form in which the concept appears. (1995, 86) As for encyclopaedic knowledge, Carston (2012) asserts that concepts are linked to “collections of encyclopaedic information, including general knowledge and individual beliefs about the things they denote, cultural knowledge, including stereotypes,...imagistic representations, and perhaps also episodic memories.” (2012, 612) Lastly, the linguistic information connected with a concept determines what phonosyntactic features the linguistic item corresponding to the concept possesses. More importantly, it is argued that not all concepts have all the specifics (2002, 321-322); for instance, Sperber and Wilson (1998) reject the idea that all concepts have a matching word in a particular language, and vice versa, since there do exist concepts without

a related word, such as the concept UNCLE-AND-AUNT that has no linguistic item bearing it, or words without an appropriate concept (1998, 184-185), as, for example, the empty *it* in *It's going to rain*.

Furthermore, according to Carston (2012), it is the encyclopaedic record connected to a concept that is an important aspect in relevance-theoretic accounts of meaning construction, since, with respect to a particular utterance situation, the most relevant of the general-knowledge information in the form of contextual assumptions helps in modifying a lexically-encoded concept in the process of 'mutual parallel adjustment'. (2012, 612) By way of explanation, with reference to the work of Sperber and Wilson (1998), Carston (2002) proposes that in verbal communication, the hearer construes "rapidly, on-line, 'locally' and in parallel" what the explicatures and implicatures communicated through the logical form provided might be, where the gap between the latter to derive the former propositions is bridged via the process of mutual parallel adjustment. (2002, 143) During the process, the hearer's speculative beliefs concerning potential explicatures, implicatures and contextual assumptions are simultaneously adjusted to arrive, via backwards inference, at the ultimate understanding of the utterance at hand that is in accord with relevance. (Carston 2010, 162) As a result, the hearer may derive an 'ad-hoc concept' of a given lexical item, a concept that "has to be inferentially derived on, and for, the particular occasion of use" (Carston 2010, 158), which no word, not even the one expressing it, bears. (Sperber and Wilson 1998, 196) As an example of the process just outlined, the following was retrieved from Carston (2010):

(19) *Let's dance*. (Carston 2010, 158)

First of all, the verb *dance* may represent different concepts when uttered on various occasions, such as at a ball, at a party, or "at a Scottish céilidh where a six-person round is about to begin". (2010, 158) On each occasion of use, the concept communicated is more restricted, denoting a specific dance, than the concept encoded. What is more, if there is a couple dancing in a not very lively way and, on hearing faster music, one of the couple says (19), the encoded concept is again narrowed as to express *dance more actively*. The concept encoded might as well be relaxed; when the same couple goes for a walk and one of them, knowing that her utterance will be recognised, wants her partner to walk in step, the ad-hoc concept DANCE\*<sup>6</sup> suggesting *walk in step* is constructed. In that way, the lexically-encoded concept may express innumerable

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<sup>6</sup> Based on the convention in the literature, the symbol of asterisk is used to denote a lexical ad-hoc concept.

ad-hoc concepts DANCE\*, DANCE\*\*, DANCE\*\*\*, and the like. (2010, 159) To demonstrate how the mutual adjustment operates in constructing such a meaning, by way of decoding, the hearer derives the concept DANCE together with the encyclopaedic entry of knowledge and assumptions about dancing, such as how it is performed, why and on what occasions, and also the hearer's personal experiences, mental images and memories of dancing are retrieved. If the intended interpretation of *dance* is *walk in step*, the concept is loosened to include lively in-step walking, but could be thought of as restricted as well since some features of the concept DANCE are perhaps discarded. The ad-hoc concept DANCE\* and consequently the explicature *Let's dance\** are arrived at by backwards inference on the basis of the mutual adjustment of assumed contextual implications (possibly, the speaker desires to let the hearer know *I am so happy and I want the world to know*), explicatures and contextual assumptions (possibly, the hearer thinks that the speaker is in an ecstatic mood, the hearer feels that both are so in love they could do anything, and so on). (2010, 162) Therefore, depending on the situation, restricting as well as loosening can occur in any form even with a single concept as “by-products of the search for relevance”. (Wilson and Carston 2007, 29) Indeed, such a treatment of a word's meaning content has been established in relevance-theoretic approaches to lexical pragmatics as a “unified” account on which “a variety of lexical-pragmatic processes may be analysed as special cases of a general pragmatic adjustment process which applies...to fine-tune the interpretation of virtually every word.” (Wilson 2004, 343)

In contrast with the “hypothesised encoded word meanings” (Carston 2012, 613), that is, the encoded, context-independent concepts obtained via decoding, ad-hoc concepts are automatically inferred with the help of contextual clues. (Carston 2002, 322-323) Nevertheless, Carston (2010) conceives the mental concepts that frequently participate in a thought and that are not encoded by any word as of the same structure as the encoded ones in that the former also provide records with logical and encyclopaedic information. On the other hand, ad-hoc concepts might as well be novel, blank concepts, not so frequently employed by a hearer, with no logical or general-knowledge information, that is, with “no established conceptual address for them”. (2010, 167) Despite the fact that novel ad-hoc concepts do not represent concepts per se, such concepts still participate in deriving explicatures (and possibly implicatures) together with the established concepts provided by the utterance. (2010, 166-167) Carston (2010) thus proposes that newly-created ad-hoc concepts are “metarepresentational” in that “what is metarepresented...is whatever concept the speaker intended by her particular use of a word”. (2010, 167) Such a phenomenon is exemplified in (20):

(20) *He's taken ideas from several different theories and **stewed** them together.*  
(Carston 2010, 167)

When talking about a person who has written many academic articles, the speaker, being familiar with the last article written, utters (20) to imply that the person has not created anything singular or innovative. The verb *stew*, denoting compiling a hotchpotch of already proposed theories in a disorganised way, is, however, unknown to the hearer as there is no concept of it in his mind. Thus, via ad-hoc concept construction and metarepresentation, the hearer lists through all his knowledge connected with stewing - that is, all the word uses known including *to cook in water with a lid on, a type of food consisting of mixture of ingredients*, and possibly the rather “negative” notions of *being anxious* and *going sour after long brewing* - and combines it with the contextual information to derive the denotation intended. (2010, 167-168) Similarly, Wilson and Carston (2007) deny that it is merely encoded concepts that take part in a communicated thought by suggesting that speakers’ encoded senses may significantly vary. That is, what a speaker may perceive as an unknown word meaning, the hearer may conceive as a word with an encoded sense, and, similarly, what the speaker may use with the belief of producing a word with an encoded sense, the hearer may interpret as an unknown word. (2007, 17) Crucially, as pointed out by Carston (2002), meaning modification is an optional pragmatic process involved in the development of explicatures. In the concluding remarks of her work, however, the author offers a claim of profound impact; given that it may be an ad-hoc concept derived on-line from the encoded one that would participate in the explicature of an utterance, the hypothesised linguistic meaning, the very encoded lexical concept, may not be involved in developing the proposition communicated. (2002, 364-365)

Accordingly, Sperber and Wilson (1998) imply that, in a way, every word encodes a ‘pro-concept’; there is something conceptual that lexical items carry, but what aspect of the conceptual substance and how it helps in developing a fully-propositional utterance entirely depends on the context of use. (1998, 185) The following example taken from Sperber and Wilson (1998) illustrates the issue in question:

(21) ***Open** the bottle.* (Sperber and Wilson 1998, 186)

With respect to the utterance in (21), *open* may be interpreted as *(to) remove the cork from the bottle in the typical way of uncorking it*. It seems only rational to be so, given the relation of the verb to its direct object, where the former derives the more specific interpretation via the latter. Still, there might be a situation where uncorking it in the typical way is not what would suffice and what is asked for. Instead, the speaker might intend the hearer to use a saw to remove the

bottom of the bottle. In this respect, the verb *open* may stand for innumerable concepts that are not lexicalised by any item and that cannot be inferred from a linguistic co-text. (1998, 186) Despite the acknowledgement that words function more as ‘pointers’ since lexical items only indicate the concept the speaker wants to communicate, Sperber and Wilson (1998) nevertheless state that “[i]t may so happen that the intended concept is the very one encoded by the word...used in its strictly literal sense.” (1998, 196-197) That is, although the verb *open* functions as a prompt for accessing a lexical concept from endless possibilities, the verb might as well express the concept derivable simply from the combination of *open* and *the bottle*. (1998, 197) In the same vein, Carston (2002) indicates that words bear encoded concepts, which, not always but only under specific circumstances, might be adjusted as to express an ad-hoc concept. Yet, the author also discusses the “highly speculative” proposal of there being encoded ‘concept schemas’, which would consequently make pragmatic inferences mandatory. In the latter view, words would not be conceived as deriving their meaning directly from their mental analogues, and thus there would be no established core concept, but only a form that would aim at a particular area at the conceptual level, with only one aspect being inferentially derived in the search for relevance. (2002, 359-361) Still, Carston (2002) concludes that since there seem to be also words with a fixed concept, “perhaps there are different kinds of lexical meanings, with some words encoding fully-fledged concepts, others encoding a schema or a pro-concept...and others a procedure or inferential constraint.” (2002, 362-363)

Even in her later work, Carston (2010) still argues for an encoded concept of words, which, with the help of a broader context and the accompanying concepts in the utterance in which it occurs, forms the basis for meaning modification. (2010, 158) Indeed, when commenting on the dance example (see above), Carston (2010) claims that “an utterance of *Children in most cultures dance spontaneously* might be an example where the encoded concept DANCE is communicated”. (2010, 159) However, contrary to the previous works, Carston (2012) is apparently beginning to doubt the suggestion of there being lexically-encoded concepts, arguing whether such general concepts can be entertained in a thought at all. (2012, 614) In connection with that, Carston (2012) puts forward the following test, using the verb *open*:

- (22) a. *Whenever I open anything I feel anxious.*  
 b. *Everyone opens things sometimes.* (Carston 2012, 614)

The idea proposed rests on the fact that opening even of indeterminate things employed in the thoughts in (22) might invoke opening concrete things, “like boxes, envelopes, files, brief-cases, and cupboards”, and, at the same time, exclude, for instance, “opening discussions,



lectures, issues, minds, hearts or cans of worms.” Although it might seem that the concepts encoded by the respective uses of *open* in (22) are concepts encompassing a vast range of possibilities, the concept OPEN thought of in either of (22) is much more limited than the general lexical concept assumed to be encoded by the verb *open* from which other specific concepts are developed. (2012, 614) Consequently, as Carston (2012) concludes, on that account, lexical concepts participating in explicatures are intrinsically ad-hoc and based purely on pragmatic inference, which a particular linguistically-encoded pointer helps to direct. (2012, 622) Also, Carston (2002) implies that, on that perspective, the clear-cut differentiation between proposition expressed and explicature is erased, with no room whatsoever for the former. It thus follows that there is only the level of explicature, on which assumption modification of the initial underdeterminacy theory ensues to derive the claim that “linguistic meaning underdetermines [even] explicature”. (2002, 366)

In accordance with what has just been said, Recanati (2004) asserts that those who argue for an encoded concept of words, which contributes to deriving full propositions but which is mostly amended as to yield the proposition communicated, are in this way “quasi-contextualists”. (2004, 97) Contextualists in the strict sense, on the other hand, conceive words as bearers of “semantic potentials...[that] serve as pointers to intended senses.” (2004, 97) Accordingly, as it might have been noticed that a similar example of *open* to that of Sperber and Wilson (1998) in (21) was offered in Section 3.2. when discussing the importance of a pragmatic context and the semantic underdeterminacy of always modulated words, Recanati (2004) seems to be in line with pure contextualists. One of the contextualists views proposed is ‘the wrong format view’, whose proponents hold that word meaning must be altered into a different, “proper format” to possibly participate in utterance interpretation, since words carry something overly skeletal, in need of augmentation, or overly complex, in need of restriction. (2004, 140) Likewise, Carston (2012) comments on contextualist approaches within the wrong format movement, according to which words bear established meaning contents that “underspecify but constrain” what words are employed to denote in communication. The element linguistic items carry is rather bare; it is “a template for concept construction, a set of constraints, a rule for use, a sense-general meaning (or ‘archi-sememe or ‘super-concept’).” (2012, 620) In this respect, Clark (2016) provides an idea of relevance theorists, saying that the determination of what linguistic items represent in terms of mental concepts always involves inference and so conceptual modification on every interpretation process. (2016, 147-148)

As a way to conclude the previous pages, the following citation from Barsalou (1993) is provided to reflect on the relation of linguistic items and what they serve to point to, that is, the conceptual components that participate in a human thought:

[Concepts] explain linguistic vagary, namely, the problem that linguistic descriptions of concepts are unprincipled, haphazard, and incomplete. Linguistic vagary simply reflects the maxim that a picture is worth a thousand words, or in more technical terms, an experiential image can be described by an infinite number of linguistic descriptions. For each of the infinite possible aspects of an image to which selective attention could be applied, there is a potential linguistic expression that describes it. (Barsalou et al. 1993, 29)

With that in mind, the theoretical part will now be concluded and the analytical part subsequently approached.

To summarise the theoretical part, first, given the unfeasibility of the Cooperative Principle due to its abstractness in defining individual maxims, as it was initially intended for philosophical arguments, Relevance Theory is embraced in this paper, offering a psychological and cognitive approach to the comprehension heuristic of a hearer, based on the notion of relevance, the Cognitive Principle and the Communicative Principle. Having established the fact that linguistic stimuli is the mostly utilised means of communication, the explicit level of an utterance was dealt with, and with this respect the proposition as conceived by truth-conditional semanticists and contextualists. What is more important, it is not sentences that can be judged true or false, since in themselves, they express nothing of interest with respect to human communication. Instead, a specific situation needs to be taken into account, as argued by contextualist, being it thus utterances that communicate propositions. Still, relevance theorists maintain that the proper bearers of propositions are thoughts, whose complexity cannot possibly be captured by any linguistic material. According to the latter, sentences underdetermine propositions explicitly expressed, and so inferential pragmatic processes become operative in order to augment semantic representations that are mentally represented as incomplete logical forms or assumption schemas, from which the right proposition and explicature are derived. In the last chapter concerned with the delineation of word meaning, purely linguistic approaches with those treating word meaning in conceptual terms were compared, the latter of which was further elaborated on with respect to the characterisation of the conceptual content a word carried. Lastly, it has become controversial whether what a word encodes might be considered as a whole concept or only a pointer to the right information needed in the exchange and extracted from the mental world.

As the last remark regarding the theoretical part, although the literature used discusses the phenomenon of linguistic underspecificity as a general phenomenon cutting across the boundaries of word classes, it was attempted to demonstrate the claims on the linguistic category of verbs. It is this particular group that has been chosen to serve the purpose of the analysis to evidence the existence of the phenomenon, which will be now approached.

## 4. Analysis

The major objective of the analytic part is to demonstrate on specific verbal occurrences from the reality show *Come Dine with Me* the thesis of linguistic underspecificity.

The current chapter first considers the formal, truth-conditional account of propositions and word meaning in natural communication. Subsequently, the proposals within the realm of linguistic semantics are discussed regarding the role of a linguistic context in evaluating the meaning content of words. After that, the principal part concerning linguistic underspecificity intends to pursue the possible outcomes indicated by Carston (2012) of treating words as bearing not whole concepts, but rather schemas for concept construction, which would have a resulting impact on the obligatoriness of inferential processes, thus making concept construction intrinsically ad-hoc. Lastly, it is indicated how such an approach may be reflected in verbal interaction. All the verbal tokens presented in this chapter are grouped in Appendix at the end of the paper.

With respect to the aims, the initial hypotheses are as follows: it is assumed that truth-conditional semantics cannot fully account for what words are used to convey, given its tenet to divorce contextual aspects from a core word meaning; it is also believed that a linguistic context, although often restricting, is not an adequate determinant of word meaning; lastly, in connection to the previous hypotheses, it is ultimately believed that there do exist English verbs that may represent a group with intrinsically underspecified linguistic content, encoding a pointer to a vast range of conceptual and encyclopaedic information stored at the mental level. The proposal might lead to the possibility that the mutual adjustment process of assumed explicatures, implicatures, and the contextual assumptions already present in a hearer's context as well as those added by the other pointers in the semantic representation uttered, always takes place, and with it ad-hoc concept construction.

Before turning to the main body of the paper, there are some issues to be settled. In what follows, the suggestions provided are largely subjective and intuition-based by virtue of the pragmatically-oriented, qualitative nature of the investigation. Since not based on hard data, it should be considered rather as an observation, with the author, although with a linguistic background, in the role of an interpreter. Moreover, inasmuch as what comes is observationally-based, the individual tokens were collected at random and will thus be provided. In other words, since the general idea behind the analysis is to evidence the very existence of linguistic underspecificity with verbs in the English language, and to provide counterarguments to some

proposals from the theoretical part, those verbs having been judged to serve the purpose were selected and will be presented.

#### **4.1. *Come Dine with Me***

The current subchapter introduces the source of the verbal occurrences on which the arguments in subsequent chapters are built. Without using any specific literature for reference, the reality show will be only generally characterised in terms of its content and the language material involved.

To begin with, the television reality show *Come Dine with Me* is a cooking competition broadcasted by *Channel 4*. In some series, the competition takes place amongst four participants over a week, each cooking on one evening, with a corresponding episode lasting for about forty-five minutes. In other series, there are five diners and five episodes, with each focusing on one host and lasting approximately twenty-three minutes. It seems to be an important aspect to point out as the shorter episodes provide more linguistic material in conversational situations. That is to say, each episode could be divided into separate language-performance parts: the diners' linguistic behaviour when cooking, the diners' monologues when providing a feedback on a particular event only for the cameras without the presence of the other diners, and, most importantly, conversational parts where all diners are gathered around the table. It is the latter that are given a longer time span in the shorter episodes and so contains more natural, spontaneously produced linguistic material. Although some might argue about the naturalness of the language used, as Crystal and Davy (1969) seem to do when claiming that "most people will behave differently if they are aware of being tape-recorded, and as a result the language they use simply cannot be taken as a reliable sample of spontaneous informal conversation" (1969, 96), it is nonetheless assumed that the contestants' being aware of the cameras does not influence the reliability of the forthcoming arguments given that what is intended is to examine spoken language that highly approximates natural speech. Still, admittedly, it is not real-life language use in the strict sense, and, moreover, a piece of exchange is sometimes incomplete given that only selected takes are showed in the episodes. Furthermore, accompanying comments are provided by the narrator of the show David Lamb, whose remarks, however, are excluded from the analysis, for what he says is pre-written.

Lastly, although the show is broadcasted also from other countries, the episodes selected for the use in the current thesis were filmed in England. Even though thus restricting the scope, there occasionally do appear speakers with other varieties of the English language. Nevertheless, since it is believed that what will be discussed along the upcoming pages holds

(and most likely not only) for the English language in general, no restrictions are made on the variety of a particular token. Having offered a summary of the television series, the analysis itself may now be approached.

## 4.2. On truth-conditional semantics

The purpose of the current section is to examine several claims proposed by the non-conceptual, linguistically-based approach introduced in Section 2.1 and Section 3.1., truth-conditional semantics, with respect to propositions and word meaning.

There is, first of all, one rather fundamental controversy that needs to be discussed before concrete verbal tokens are dealt with. Generally speaking, in the truth-conditional semantics as outlined in Evans and Green (2006), sentences can be truth-evaluated only when translated into a metalanguage that serves as the base to be evaluated in this respect. As it is often noted, however, where the boundaries of a sentence lie, specifically in spoken language, is often unclear. Although it is possible to follow phonetic clues, it seems to be a tool of poor reliability. If it is acknowledged, in the truth-conditional vein, that a natural language sentence “is a linguistic object, a well-formed grammatical string of words that can be described according to its grammatical properties” (Evans and Green 2006, 448-449), the grammaticality of which, again, is rather controversial (Quirk et al. 1985, 47), it seems to be the case that only clear-cut, strictly determined simple sentences formed as tokens for proving the claims of language philosophers are convenient for truth-conditional evaluation. Not only is the delineation of clause boundaries subject to intuitions given that the source investigated consists of naturally flowing spoken material; natural language is also full of, for instance, sub-sentential fragments, sentences that do not seem to convey a state of affairs, or sentences with filled-in linguistic features, which is exemplified below:

- (1) Sam: *Salad...very good. Pigeon...don't need to have it again.*  
(S37E18, 17:16)<sup>7</sup>
- (2) Philip: *In Philip's world, you see, you can buy for pigeon's breast for £2.99...  
hygienically wrapped...on a polystyrene tray. So, why would you,  
God, shoot the damn thing?* (S37E18, 17:46)

In one episode, Sam, one of the diners, provides for the cameras the feedback offered in (1), concerning the starter served earlier. As regards the truth-conditional content of the two

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<sup>7</sup> The abbreviation used with each example stands for the number of a corresponding series and episode respectively, followed by the time at which each token appears.

sentences, considering that truth-evaluable are only those linguistic objects that meet the criterion of its parts connected by grammatical well-formedness, then, the fragmentary utterance given in (1) cannot possibly be truth-evaluated. Furthermore, as the purpose of a metalanguage is to yield the proposition of a corresponding sentence, with respect to which its truth and consequently its meaning is determined against a state of affairs in the modelled world reflected by the sentence, the last sentence in (2) in the form of an interrogative cannot be truth-evaluated, for questions do not reflect a state of affairs, that is, a proposition; only declarative sentences and ergo statements do, which makes for a rather limited scope of truth-conditional semantics, as also supported by Evans and Green (2006, 172). Lastly, natural language utterances are full of such features as pragmatic markers, as exemplified in (2) by the focus marker *you see*, and errors, such as the renewal *for*, both of which cannot be accounted for by a metalanguage. It is not being suggested that the two are bearers of meaning per se, although one might argue for the speaker-meaning value of the pragmatic marker, which is, nonetheless, still excluded from the truth-conditional account. What is being suggested is that such features reflect natural speech flow as it appears in everyday communication, and that communication should be the chief purpose of natural language sentences to suit.

As far as word meaning is concerned, it was stated in Section 3.1. that truth-conditional semantics advocates for word meanings being stored in the mental lexicon of an interlocutor in a context-independent, strictly-established definitional form that is possible to be delineated by a set of semantic primitives. What is being questioned here is especially the possibility of the pre-given meaning of words devoid of any context participating in truth-conditional evaluation. To justify the righteousness of the doubt, the example of *kill* is offered:

- (3) Philip: *D'you think this is like Spanish baby food?*  
 Sam: (laughing) *Yeah, is a little bit, actually. That's very true, very true.*  
*You mean it in the nicest possible way, I'm guessing.*  
 (S37E18, 27:14)
- (4) Tom: *Philip absolutely **killed** her with that with the baby-food comment. Ehm,*  
*I don't think any of us disagreed either.*  
 (S37E18, 27:25)

Concentrating on the utterances in (3), Philip's comment is uttered at the table when all diners are eating soup, which the host, Sam, has just served. Later, when providing a feedback on the starter only for the cameras, Tom expresses his opinion given in (4) with regard to Philip's comment. Taking the truth-conditional perspective on word meaning when considering the verb *kill*, it is assumed that for that sentence to be true, there must be some entity *Philip* and *Sam*

that are engaged in the process *kill* by the instrument *comment*, which, if the matter is simplified, is translated into a predicate-calculus formula that stands for the proposition subsequently evaluated against the model of the world in which there is certain Philip that killed Sam with a comment. However, if it is the sense encoded in the mental lexicon that is devoid of any context that participates in truth-evaluation, and if it is supposed that the encoded sense in the lexicon might amount to the one “[t]o overwhelm (a person) by a strong impression on the mind, as of admiration, astonishment, alarm, grief, etc.: to impress with irresistible force”<sup>8</sup> enlisted in the *Oxford English Dictionary (OED)* and resembling the interpretation of *kill* in (4) the most, it still seems not to capture the one participating in the thought of Tom, for it is believed that the communicated sense could denote *throw her out of balance with the comment, but hit the nail on its head*. In other words, the expressive meaning of hitting the nail on its head, that is, that Philip’s comment was very apt, is not included in the skeletal dictionary meaning. Moreover, Sam does not seem to be overwhelmed in any way for Tom to use the verb *kill* with the dictionary sense, as could be also apparent from her response. It appears to be the case that the aspect of Sam being overwhelmed by a strong impression of the mind or impressed with irresistible force is excluded and only the sense of aptness remains. Most importantly, such a sense is not listed in the *OED*, here, the hypothetical mental lexicon of an average English native speaker. It is likely that the sense is obtained only with respect to the current situation, the context of use, involving Tom’s intentions. It needs to be this specific sense to contribute to the truth of the sentence, but given the pragmatic context needed to augment the verb in order to promote the sentence to the truth-evaluable status, it cannot be the sentence on its own that is true.

As another example, the utterance in (5) was selected from the reality show to illustrate the impossibility to consider word meaning without referring to its situation of use:

- (5) Nicole: *Quite hard. I put my fork and knife in it and it just **exploded** everywhere.* (S37E18, 07:15)

The utterance above is part of Nicole’s feedback on the starter, bruschetta with feta cheese and tomatoes, served by Tom on the first night. When eating the starter, Nicole uses fork and knife to cut the bruschetta, which results in a piece of bruschetta landing in her lap. On that note, Nicole provides the comment in (5). Once again, if the truth value of the sentence is sought,

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<sup>8</sup> "kill, v.". OED Online. June 2017. Oxford University Press.  
<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/103361?result=5&rskey=RDcOWw&> (accessed June 15, 2017).



where the right sense of *explode* is to be chosen from the lexicon, here in the form of the possible *OED* entries “[o]f an object: to shatter, burst, or break apart violently through the action of pressure, typically from within, scattering fragments outwards” or “[t]o expel or propel suddenly, esp. violently and noisily”<sup>9</sup>, none of the senses are likely to participate in the truth-evaluable sentence content. Indeed, it is assumed that no conceivable mental lexicon stores a sense that could be paraphrased as, when the dictionary-like wording is adopted, (*of a crunchy type of food, especially toasted bread*) *to jump off a surface and shatter into pieces when being cut, often ending in one’s lap*. It is argued that such a sense is possible to retrieve only with reference to the situation on the basis of which the verb *explode* encompasses all the events that ensue when Nicole cuts into the bruschetta, namely its jumping off the plate, shattering into pieces and falling off the table into Nicole’s lap. What is more, it is only this sense that can participate in the truth evaluation of the sentence for it to be judged true and consequently, according to truth-conditional semantics, meaningful. Furthermore, in Section 2.1., when discussing the necessity of establishing a situation with respect to which an utterance could be truth-evaluated, it was argued that even the individual linguistic items in a sentence can be modified with respect to the established situation. Therefore, the utterance might be said to need to include the bruschetta-accident moment as the situation of evaluation against which the meaning of the word could be narrowed as to include food with the type of shattering like pieces of bruschetta falling off, which, however, reaches beyond the realm of truth-conditional semantics.

As the last counterexample to the belief that there is a set of fixed senses in an individual’s lexicon, describable by a handful of semantic primitives, and that a sense from the established set contributes to the propositionality of a sentence, the following use of the verb *ball* is provided:

- (6) Daniel: *I did feel as if I was being literally **balled** towards the ball ehm given its gravitational field that was that big.* (S40E25, 29:31)

First of all, Daniel utters (6) as part of the feedback regarding the starter he was served earlier, meat balls with tomato sauce, possibly suggesting that the meat balls were too big for a starter. The use of the verb *ball* seems to represent an extreme case of a counterexample given the creative, possibly one-off use of the verb. In other words, if it is assumed that the *OED*

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<sup>9</sup> "explode, v.". *OED Online*. June 2017. Oxford University Press.  
<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/66640?redirectedFrom=explode> (accessed June 16, 2017).

represents the hypothetical mental lexicon, there is no sense listed in the dictionary that could be equated with the one that is utilised in utterance (6). When the core dictionary definition is sought, the verb may be reworded along the lines (*of an object in the form of a ball*) *to attract someone or something*, which seems to be used figuratively in this case to suggest that the meat ball is too big and so when eating the whole ball, Daniel feels heavier and consequently attracted towards the plate with the remaining ball. Not only does it appear unthinkable that the dictionary-like entry is encoded in the lexicon of a potential hearer, or, indeed, possibly even in Daniel's himself, but also that neither the figurative use, which is likely to be the relevant sense in the current use, is thus encoded. Consequently, as neither the former nor the latter is an established sense, it seems to be the case that the verb, when embracing the view of truth-conditional semantics, possesses nothing with which it would contribute to the truth evaluation of the overall sentence.

All in all, inasmuch as the relevance-theoretic perspective is embraced, the proposal developed here coincides with the one offered by Carston (2002), who states that "it is not clear that we really want [the notion of the truth-conditional content of an utterance] in our pragmatics at all, especially if, as relevance theorists argue, the proper domain of a truth-conditional semantic theory is thoughts/assumptions...rather than sentences or utterances." (2002, 337) Consequently, if it is argued that sentences serve the purpose to restrict the inferential processes of a hearer to make communication as effortless as possible, as implied in Section 1.2., the propositional content, the message intended, the thought one wants to communicate to her audience cannot be equated with a sentence built out of parts in a dictionary-like form separated from contextual information. It might be suggested that such denotation of words would reflect the world in some sense. However, the aim of the speaker, it is believed, is not to connect "words and the world" via truth (Recanati 2004, 92-93), but her thoughts via words. Therefore, the notion of truth conditions thus excluded from the current account of word meaning, the following section will focus on possible insufficiency of a linguistic context in establishing meaning of linguistic expressions.

### **4.3. On lexical semantics**

As suggested in Subchapter 3.1., within the lexical semantics proposed by Cruse (1986), some senses are permanently stored with corresponding (abstract) lexical forms in the mental lexicon as lexical units, which gain at least part of their meaning via contextual relations, that is, relations with other items in a language system in all conceivable linguistic contexts as well as the sentence context present, in which the relations are established paradigmatically and

syntagmatically. Accordingly, in what follows, the claim will be discussed that it is possible to rely only on a linguistic context in interpreting selected English verbs.

To tackle the issue, the utterance given below offers the first verb that will be considered in this respect:

- (7) Sharon: *Ehm, my action plan for dealing with Jane tonight is to fill her up with food, fill her up with a lot of food, so if she's she's eating, she can't be talking and **dominate** the table.* (S37E23, 33:33)

First of all, the utterance was made with respect to the previous nights during which Jane, one of the diners, was constantly interrupting, not letting the others finish when they were talking. Sharon is finding it rather irritating, as she herself repeatedly admits (see, for instance, S37E23, 10:25; 19:37; 21:26), and wants to avoid such happenings on her night of hosting. Supposing, as Cruse (1986) does, that there is the sense “[t]o bear rule over, control, sway; to have a commanding influence on; to master”<sup>10</sup> enlisted in the mental lexicon of the hearer or, better to say, the viewer, it seems to be the case that neither the sense in general nor the sub-senses in particular fully determines what the verb *dominate* in (7) represents. Moreover, going from the narrowest to the broader co-text of the utterance to explain for the meaning of *dominate*, the direct object of the verb, *the table*, does not appear to help select the very sense of the verb indicated by Sharon in (7); given the sense listed above, no trait of *table* seems to interact with any of the sub-senses to yield the one expressed by *dominate* regarding talking. It is even supported by the fact that, although possibly of no scientific value, a random search of the internet shows that the word pair mostly indicates a player’s strength in a game of poker, tennis, or implies that an object is the most prominent in terms of its bulk on a table. Further, despite the fact that the sentential co-text, particularly the verb *talking*, does indicate that the way Jane would dominate the table would regard uttering words, even this lexical unit is of no help to establish the exact sense of *dominate*. That is, even though now the trait *via words* is promoted, so the sense could be reworded in some such way as *(to) power over via words*, even then it is believed that the content by no means denotes what it is used to denote in this particular situation, for the verb could express a host of senses that would fit the context of use, for instance, *(to) hold a discussion by constantly reopening an old topic*, *(to) interrupt and get the*

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<sup>10</sup> "dominate, v.". OED Online. June 2017. Oxford University Press.  
<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/56694?redirectedFrom=dominate> (accessed June 18, 2017).

*attention, (to) talk incessantly, (to) lead extensive monologues, (to) tell boring and/or vulgar anecdotes no one wants to hear, and so on. It is thus assumed that what needs to be utilised is the broader, pragmatic context in order to come to the most likely interpretation of the verb and thus the utterance. It is only having the background knowledge, common assumptions one might say, having been established by the diners' interaction during the previous nights that the right interpretation, most conceivably the second in this case, can be arrived at.*

There are innumerable many tokens in the episodes plausibly demonstrating the claim currently under discussion regarding the insufficiency of a linguistic context. The following was selected as further supporting the argument:

- (8) Emma: *Surely, we all laughed at me, we were all **entertained** by me. So, has that not made your week more enjoyable?* (S25E25, 14:10)

To begin with, as part of hosting, competitors are expected to provide entertainment for their guests. The verb *entertain* appears many times in diners' feedbacks on a particular kind of entertainment in the show. It is believed that inasmuch as the verb is so frequently uttered with reference to so diverse situations, the meaning of *entertain* varies as well. Nevertheless, considering that the speaker is engaged in a cooking competition, the most adequate of the *OED* senses for *entertain* seem to be “[t]o engage agreeably the attention of (a person); to amuse” and “[t]o receive as a guest; to show hospitality to”<sup>11</sup>. Given the situational context and Emma's intentions, it is the former sense that participates in the utterance. The process of contextual selection having been conducted, it may still be reasonable to say that the verb here is underspecified in terms of the manner of entertainment, an aspect of which is not possible to derive purely on the basis of a linguistic context without the reference to the particular situation. That is, Emma says (8) on the last night of the competition as a sign of her dissatisfaction with how the other diners have made cutting mockery remarks on her self-centredness and low intelligence. Therefore, not only is the aspect of intentionality and willingness in providing entertainment erased in this particular situation, but also the agency is transferred, making it the other diners who provide the entertainment for themselves. Moreover, it is argued that without such background knowledge, the verb *entertain* would not be interpreted as *(to) amuse by ridiculing or belittling with ironic derogatory comments*, but could possibly be understood as *(to) amuse by making fun of one's disordered behaviour, (to) find interest in laughing at one's*

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<sup>11</sup> "explode, v.". *OED Online*. June 2017. Oxford University Press.  
<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/66640?redirectedFrom=explode> (accessed June 16, 2017).

*inabilities, (to) be engrossed in teasing someone*, and many others. Such interpretations cannot be gathered purely from the linguistic context, but only with regard to the broader, pragmatic context. Not only is it argued that not all aspects of a situation that could interact with a meaning of a word could be established by a linguistic context, but also that such features vary and also appear to highly depend on a hearer's inference, which will be elaborated on in more detail in the next part.

Meanwhile, as the last evidence supporting the argument in question, two occurrences of *backfire* are given below:

- (9) Tom: *We're doing some orange juice, something a little bit different. This may **backfire**, but damned sure this is the way to go with this couscous.* (S37E18, 08:54)
- (10) Ross: *I was mentioning how nice the coulis was and ehm, obviously, it went wrong for me, it **backfired**.* (S37E25, 19:04)

Assuming that the enlisted sense of *backfire*, this time retrieved from *Oxford Dictionaries* as it provides more accurate paraphrase of the sense than the *OED*, could be thought of as an established sense in the hypothetical mental lexicon, the following is offered to illustrate how the verb is represented in such a lexicon: “(of a plan or action) have an opposite and undesirable effect to what was intended”<sup>12</sup>. Nonetheless, it is believed that this skeletal sense is not sufficient, and that the right sense is not derivable only via the linguistic co-text. By way of explanation, Tom provides the utterance in (9) when preparing a main course for the other diners, commenting on the process that he is going to soak couscous in orange juice instead of water. It does not seem unlikely that the interpretation of *backfire* or, better to say, one of the many plausible interpretations of *backfire* is *(to) not work out by being refused to be eaten*, which, although preserving the undertone of *something not going according to plan*, amounts to a meaning far from the dictionary-like sense. Moreover, no lexical item in the utterance appears to suggest the way in which adding the orange juice may backfire. That is to say, it is not unreasonable to think, for instance, that the backfire-effect could amount to the juice turning the couscous sour, or that the others would score Tom lower points, and so on. It is only when the pragmatic context is taken into account that the sense of *backfire* possibly represents the one provided above (“possibly” is important here, since it is not known what Tom exactly

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<sup>12</sup> *Oxford Dictionaries*, s.v. “backfire,” accessed January 22, 2017, <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/backfire>.

means). Hence, the sense as found in the dictionary is lacking the true sense that is obtained only with respect to its reference. That is, the broader context needs to be taken into consideration to augment the skeleton in order to derive the relevant sense, for which purpose the linguistic material alone is unhelpful. The token in (9) can be compared with the one in (10). The latter utterance is preceded by the situation when Lisa served a starter with mango coulis in a plastic bottle that could be squeezed to squirt the coulis out. When Lisa squeezed the bottle, the coulis splashed out all over the plate and the table, and with respect to that, Ross dipped his food on Lisa's plate, the act of which was straightforwardly and harshly criticised by others at the table. Ross comments on what happened, suggesting that what he did backfired. As with (9), even here the sense selected from the lexicon may amount to *(to) result in the opposite effect than intended* (although the aspect of oppositeness of the action seems to be rather dubious), and yet the sense appears to be far from capturing the sense communicated, possibly approximating the one *(to) have the unwanted result of being condemned as extremely socially inappropriate and repulsive*.

Supposing that something similar as the dictionary senses above are established in the mental lexicon, the senses, the verbal lexical units provided in this section, merely approximate the intended ones in the respective situations. This consequently raises the question whether the established ones are ever utilised by a speaker engaged in conversation. Certainly, Cruse (1986) makes it explicit that his semantics is to be abstracted from all the negative influences of general knowledge and pragmatic meaning to maintain systematicity and simplicity of his lexical-semantics account. Yet, when discussing contextual selection from numerous senses of ambiguous words, Grice's Cooperative principle is called for to justify a speaker's intentions as not deceptive, because sentence normality gives way to contextual normality for the sake of communicative intentions (cf. Cruse 1986, 53-54). It thus seems to be the case that even within the realm of lexical semantics, some pragmatic aspects are adopted. What is crucial here is the fact that word meaning, a sense, will always vary with respect to its reference, as suggested by Barsalou et al. (1993), since senses are contingent on the situation of utterance. It should be made explicit that it is of no intention to devalue the lexical semantics as proposed by Cruse (1986); the argument here is probably more of a pragmatic (in non-linguistic sense) nature: if words have always served and probably will serve first and foremost the purpose of communication, which is most likely a one-off phenomenon at a given moment as it is used to convey a thought one attempts to get across but may vary in the way of capturing it linguistically, and for which purpose words are thus tailored with respect to the situation as they are not uttered "[i]n vacuo" (Recanati 2004, 2), the question is why to insist on a word-meaning

account that “seek[s] out and highlight[s] anything which lends itself to generalisation, ... any tendency towards structure, system and recurrence, in the domain of word-meaning.” (Cruse 1986, 20)

As it has been indicated several times in this subchapter, even with a broader, pragmatic context accessed to find the right meaning of a verb, the range of possibilities from which the selection is made may vary indefinitely, which is an idea that will be dealt with in the next subchapter.

#### 4.4. On linguistic underspecificity of English verbs

In the present section, it will be demonstrated on concrete examples that certain verbs might be thought of as graphic or phonetic strings that are prompts<sup>13</sup> to concepts and thoughts, which will be set into the frame of the relevance-theoretic comprehension heuristic. Because of the indefiniteness of possible interpretations such prompts offer, as was suggested in the previous part and will be illustrated in more detail in the current one, a speaker may inject indefinite meanings to a linguistic form, so which one is inferentially arrived at by a hearer remains and will remain, it is believed, individual and private, although restricted by interlocutors’ common context. Additionally, for what follows, it needs to be said that although the encyclopaedic information that verbs mediate is paraphrased as a verbal entry in a dictionary, it is by no means thought to be thus represented in the mind. It will be so paraphrased for the convenience sake to resemble verbal representations.

The first verb to be discussed is *struggle*. The following utterance was made by one of the diners on the very first evening in response to having just been served a starter, that is, goat’s cheese and caramelised onion tart:

- (11) Felix: *I really think this looks lovely. I really **struggle** with goat’s cheese. I will try my best because it looks so lovely and I don’t want to offend thee.* (S37E13, 07:19)

First of all, although Felix made it explicit earlier in the video that he is *not a fan of goat’s cheese* (02:14), the utterance of which is provided only for the cameras without the other diners present, such an assumption does not seem to influence, from the perspective of the author, a possible interpretation of (11). To put it differently, the only clue supplied by Felix’s previous

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<sup>13</sup> This term is frequently used in Evans and Green (2006) to suggest a similar idea.

utterance is that he will not be particularly keen on what he is going to be served. On uttering *I really struggle with goat's cheese*, however, there still appear to be multiple interpretations anyhow. When the purely dictionary-like meaning is considered, *struggle* might refer to a kind of fighting with someone, something, or some force, requiring physical effort, and an abstract way of fighting where a person is having difficulty with, but facing and trying to get off the grip of, for instance, feeling, problem, or a situation.<sup>14</sup> However, the utterance being a part of an exchange, none of these have the required communicative value that the verb seems to bear. Further, when the other linguistic material is taken into account, this does not appear to be of much help either, since none of the adjacent lexical elements specify what the verb truly represents; even the prepositional phrase *with goat's cheese*, despite the fact that it helps to restrict the assumptions about the possible interpretation of (11) to the culinary world, is seemingly of no use in establishing the very substance of *struggle*. Although, it might be argued that even the sentence element accompanying *struggle* does not have the distinguishing function, as there might as well be a situation, for instance, a discussion of the current rise in food prices where in response to one speaker's utterance *Because of the rise, I can afford nothing from what I used to buy before*, the other says *I don't really mind, but I really struggle with goat's cheese. The price of it has gone astronomical*. Thus, the linguistic context seems to narrow the possible interpretation of *struggle* in (11), but not to define it.

It is thus believed that a broader context should be accessed to come nearer the right interpretation. Assuming the relevance-theoretic comprehension procedure, the host, Lynsey, is likely to have certain contextual facts and assumptions connected with the situation in her cognitive environment now mobilised. As characterised by Sperber and Wilson (1995) in Section 1.2., it might be beliefs about what the speaker might think, general knowledge connected with dining, assumptions about the current discourse and the physical context regarding her cooking, quality of her food, or satisfaction of her guests, she might mentally represent memories connected with dining in general, or dining with her family in particular, and possibly other assumptions. Moreover, some of the assumptions will resonate in the mutual cognitive environment of the host and Felix, most likely the assumptions about the host's cooking and the starter. On uttering (11), some of the assumptions now become more salient given the semantic representation of the sentence that prompts the subsequent assumptions

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<sup>14</sup> "struggle, v.". OED Online. June 2017. Oxford University Press.  
<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/191911?rskey=HFrjwP&result=2&isAdvanced=false> (accessed June 16, 2017).



regarding goat's cheese and struggling, and these might even combine with those being already entertained. Consequently, having just presented her guests the starter, Lynsey expects this particular utterance to have some relevance in how it is connected to the current situation. The utterance must achieve the optimal relevance by being relevant enough to be worth her effort. Since relevance is achieved by striking the balance between effort and effects, the utterance must produce enough cognitive effects to be worth the cognitive endeavour. Therefore, Lynsey is likely to follow the path of least effort in the search for relevance and stop when the first interpretation meets her expectation of relevance.

What is at issue in the current thesis is that in doing so, it is argued that Lynsey undertakes the process of mutual parallel adjustment of assumed explicatures, contextual implications and contextual assumptions, in order to adjust the explicit level by backwards inference for the utterance to have some cognitive effects. If it is believed, following Sperber and Wilson (1995), that the meanings of sentences amount to semantic representations with underspecified elements, occurring in the mind as incomplete logical forms from which the explicature is derived, the thought explicated, and if it is the case that semantic representations can thus yield to consciousness only after the process of decoding takes place, the question arises what it is that is actually decoded. In other words, as indicated in Subchapter 3.3., some authors argue that there is an encoded concept and others, or the same after a lapse of time, propose that there is only a schema, a pointer, a super-concept, whatever the theory adopted, that is not a lexically-encoded concept, an element of thought, but something on the basis of which a particular concept is construed. Additionally, it was suggested that (at least) Carston (2002, 2010), Sperber and Wilson (1998), Wilson and Carston (2007) and Wilson (2004) embrace the view that some words do encode a whole concept, which, on the process of linguistic decoding, makes accessible a host of encyclopaedic information. However, as far as the utterance *I struggle with goat's cheese* is concerned, it appears to be rather unclear what the encoded lexical concept of *struggle*, the hypothesised encoded word meaning, would be. To put it differently, if it is acknowledged that there is a general lexically-encoded concept through which an array of encyclopaedic information is accessed, and from which range some information is more salient and consequently deployed in the interpretation of a particular utterance, the issue is whether the very encoded concept as a whole ever so contributes to the thought communicated.

In accordance with what has just been said, it is believed that, given the strong essentialist view that thoughts cannot be expressed in their entirety by any linguistic system, there is a good deal left on Lynsey, who, via the clues provided by the linguistic stimuli, the context and the assumptions, and possibly via the process of metarepresentation, is supposed to arrive at the

intended thought. It might be the case that, through *struggle*, the linguistic trigger, the schema, a range of encyclopaedic assumptions connected with it becomes available, with some more operative than the others, given the context and the accompanying linguistic items, specifically the phrase *with the goat's cheese*. On that grounds, the ad-hoc concept STRUGGLE\* is construed, which might stand for the interpretations *(to) find distasteful*, *(to) not be able conquer the smell*, *(to) have difficulties swallowing because of the texture*, *(to) feel nauseous when eating it*, *(to) have problems eating it because of a really unpleasant accident once experienced*, or even *(to) be reminded of having a goat farm when a child, which has left an indelible imprint on the mind*, and innumerable others. As regards the process of mutual adjustment, the semantic skeleton gives rise to the process of combining tentative explicatures, contextual implications, possibly *I might not eat the whole starter* or *It is nothing personal if I do not finish the starter*, and the contextual assumptions given above, on the basis of which the expressed thought, the explicature, with the ad-hoc concept STRUGGLE\*, and possibly, if it is the desired cognitive effect, the right implicature are inferred by backwards inference. Considering the mind-reading nature of interpreting the speaker's thoughts on the basis of the physical context, stimuli, and other features that belong to the mutual cognitive environment of Felix and Lynsey, the latter might represent the information connected with mental and possibly physical responses to unpleasant smells, like nausea and anxiety, as the most operative of the encyclopaedic information that the linguistic trigger makes available and that contributes to the meaning construction of *struggle*, presumably represented as *(to) not be able to conquer the smell*. Thus, the ad-hoc concept STRUGGLE\* may be inferred by the hearer with the belief that this is the very concept participating in the thought that the speaker intends to communicate.

To support the argument, another token of *struggle* found within the same episode is given in (12):

- (12) Felix: *The first thing I'd **struggle** with was how you ate my leftover starters. Considering the fact that you'd only just met me, I really didn't expect that.* (S37E13, 38:36)

The utterance in (12) was made during a heated discussion on the last night of the competition about finishing other people's dishes, for on the first night, when Lynsey was hosting, Shirley finished Felix's starter (08:01). The quarrel is provoked by Shirley remarking on losing one's memory when getting old, on which note Felix asks whether Shirley has forgotten about her (verbally) abusing him through the week. After that, although there is a cut in the video, so it needs to be admitted that further utterances may have preceded, Felix expresses (12).

As with (11), supposing that the process as suggested above takes place where the sentence meaning is retrieved by decoding the semantic representation into an incomplete logical form in the mind which serves as an assumption schema to construe the explicature intended, again, the argument lies with what the individual elements carry that undergoes the process of decoding. With lexical verbs being the focus of the thesis, the token of *struggle* in (12) seems to be far from expressing anything definite. To put it differently, the ongoing discourse and the events that have provoked the discussion are likely to narrow what the word denotes to a meaning concerning only the abstract inner conflict of not being particularly content with certain happenings. However, the essence of the concept triggered by *struggle* that is part of the communicated thought appears to be far from captured by only these clues. Once again, undertaking the relevance-theoretic interpretation procedure, Shirley searches for the relevance of this particular utterance in (12) with respect to the ongoing discussion. The utterance, in order to be relevant enough to be worth Shirley's effort, must supply enough cognitive effects. If it is assumed that these cognitive effects are obtained by the mutual adjustment of tentatively estimated explicatures, contextual assumptions, and contextual implications, from which combination the intended explicated thought, and possibly the right implicature, is inferred, it seems to be the case that the following process occurs: on uttering *The first thing I'd struggle with was how you ate my leftover starters*, the linguistic trigger *struggle* is presumably combined with the contextual assumptions occurring in the mutual cognitive environment regarding the physical context and the ongoing debate, also the assumptions about table manners, the overall experiences with food gained throughout the week, and so on; further contextual assumptions are added by the semantic skeleton, particularly those encyclopaedic assumptions connected with the linguistic prompts *struggle*, *ate* and *my leftover starters*; all the preceding is combined with the possible contextual implications *I think that you lack table manners*, or, Felix being American, *In America, we consider it to be the ultimate in rudeness and so it repulses me*, from which either might be the resulting contextual effect.

If it is claimed that every prompt induces the relevance-driven inferential process of constructing a concept with the help of associated encyclopaedic information, it might work with *struggle* in the following manner: the verb gives access to a vast array of encyclopaedic information, paraphrasable as *(to) overcome negative force*, *(to) exert a lot of effort*, *(to) face physical or psychological obstacles, such as things in a way or things not working properly*, *people by physical force*, *natural elements*, *difficult or unexpected situations*, *overwhelming or ungraspable feelings*, it might include personal experience and encounters, even the recent experience given in (11), there may be also mental images of struggling connected, and in this

way other information. Given the fact that some of the information is filtered out by the linguistic material present and the broader situational context, the inferred ad-hoc concept STRUGGLE\* constrained by the encoded template might amount to the verbal-like definition (*to find it unbelievable and baffling because...*, which contributes to the derived thought that is attempted to approximate the intended one. Shirley is thus left with a great deal of inferential, and conceivably metarepresentational, work to be done to arrive at the intended thought and specifically the intended concept STRUGGLE\*, which is underspecified by the linguistic prompt *struggle* and created only for the purpose to meet the expectation of relevance.

The discussion of *struggle* will be concluded by the last token offered in (13). The question is asked when the starter, bruschetta with feta cheese, is being eaten:

- (13) Sam: *Do you **struggle** with things in your beard?*  
Philip: *I did find a bit of bagel in it one day.* (S37E18, 07:28)

Here, as with the previous example, the question is uttered after a cut, so it must be admitted that it remains obscure what discussion or utterances might have preceded. Nonetheless, it is likely that Sam's question is raised independently of anything having been said but with respect to the circumstances, that is, the facts that Philip has got a full beard and that the diners are eating crunchy bruschetta with a crumbly texture. Still, what the verb *struggle* in the interrogative signifies seems to be by no means resolved by the contextual features. More specifically, assuming the relevance-theoretic interpretation process, Philip, on hearing *Do you struggle with things in your beard?*, starts searching for its relevance. Considering that the mutual cognitive environment of Sam and Philip includes the mutually manifest assumptions about the physical environment - particularly the starter being eaten and also Philip's flowing beard - and other assumptions regarding the starter, especially its crunchy texture that makes it crumble when being eaten, and regarding the scientific hypothesis even so self-evident as that, given gravity, crumbs of a particular food fall down rather than fly, the relevance is searched with respect to such contextual assumptions. To the contextual assumptions just provided, further assumptions may be added, namely those retrieved from the encyclopaedic entries connected with the linguistic prompts *things*, *beard* and, of course, *struggle*. With the cognitive effect conceivably being the implication of Sam *I am intrigued by your flowing beard*, the range of potential implications, including the one given but perhaps also *I want to warn you that some crumbs are falling down into your beard* and others, undergoes the mutual adjustment process with the contextual assumptions and possible explicatures, operating on the skeletal semantic representation of Sam's question.

With respect to *struggle*, its content partly restricted by the adjacent linguistic material and the context, it may stimulate such encyclopaedic information connected with the pointer, reworded into verbal-like definitions as *(to) find irritating food falling in the beard, (to) happen to get a lot of things into the beard, like food, lint from cloth, dust or dandelion fluff carried by a draft of wind or other items, (to) have difficulties to comb out the things*, and so on. All this knowledge connected with the prompt *struggle*, limited by its context of use and co-text, might be the most highly activated encyclopaedic assumptions. Nevertheless, the second being presumably the most operative and weighed against the background of contextual assumptions and contextual implications, appears to be constructive of the ad-hoc concept STRUGGLE\*, with the resultant verbal rewording *(to) happen to get a lot of things into the beard, like food*, participating in the derived thought. That this is the most likely interpretation being construed by Philip is even reflected in his response *I did find a bit of bagel in it one day*. At the same time, it does not seem unthinkable to imagine a situation where Philip would access different information from the conceptual-encyclopaedic region to construe the concept STRUGGLE\*\*, amounting to *(to) find irritating food falling in the beard*, in order to come to the ultimate interpretation of Sam's question in the search for relevance that would yield some contextual effect, potentially the implicature *I wouldn't bear such a long beard, I would shave it off*. Such a possibility could conceivably be reflected in the hypothetical response given below:

(14) Sam: *Do you **struggle** with things in your beard?*

Philip: *No, it's fine. I brush them out once in a while and that's all. I would never shave off my beard.*

Accordingly, what conceptual information a hearer employs through a linguistic prompt in the relevance-theoretic comprehension procedure is believed to be concealed, manifest to no one but the hearer himself. To conclude the discussion about *struggle*, it may be said that the lexical concept of *struggle* is created on the spot, which would indicate that it would be always ad-hoc. The concept would thus be construed in the now obligatory, inferentially-based process of mutual parallel adjustment of possible explicatures, contextual assumptions, and contextual implications, operating on the semantic skeleton of the utterance in which it occurs, from the process of which the most likely explicature, the thought communicated, would be derived, containing the ad-hoc concept. It would also mean that there would be no general lexical concept to be decoded, but only a trigger or a schema.

To further support the hypotheses in question, the verb *panic* was chosen from the show. The following utterance was made not during a discussion with the other diners, but as a

separate reply, possibly, to what one of the television crew had asked. It is not perceived to devalue the forthcoming argument, for the mere difference lies with developing a comprehension process of a potential viewer. The utterance is provided in (15):

- (15) Becky: *I'm just so happy that they like cheese, 'cause literally I **panicked** till about three o'clock this afternoon in case they didn't like cheese. So, yeah, it's going really well.* (S37E14, 07:30)

As far as the general sense of the verb *panic* is concerned, someone might panic or something might panic someone, where panicking possibly includes a state of worry or restlessness, one might also be acting panicky, that is, when someone panics, they panic even physically, and all this behaviour, either physical or psychological, is governed by a sudden spasm of irrational thinking at the given moment.<sup>15</sup> Considering the linguistic material, the words in the utterance do not appear to specify what *panicked* stands for, except that the act of panic was caused by the doubt about the diners' eating cheese in such an amount. Furthermore, although the utterance stands alone between two cuts, the last clause in (15) may imply the questions *How is it going?* or *Is it going well?*, which might have preceded. However, it seems to be the case that there was no ongoing discourse specifically about panicking, possible ways of panicking, or a detailed commentary on how Becky panicked provided for the viewers. On the whole, the potential hearer is left only with the narrower co-text, which, nevertheless, by no means specifies what the verb truly denotes.

What is of fundamental importance here, and what is in contrast with the previous examples, is the fact that even the broader context is not likely to be of much help. To put it differently, assuming the interpretation of potential viewers, there has not been any mention or sign of panicking in the video up to the moment of the utterance in (15). Therefore, adopting the relevance-theoretic comprehension heuristic, the mutually manifest assumptions in the common cognitive environment of Becky and the viewers do not seem to involve any regarding Becky's panicking. Still, it is likely to include the assumptions concerning the physical environment, that is, Becky's cooking preparations and all what it has involved, there might be assumptions about hosting in general, but also about hosting a dinner party for four guests as part of a broadcasted competition, and, needless to say, the assumption about the mutual

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<sup>15</sup> "panic, v.". OED Online. June 2017. Oxford University Press.  
<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/136853?rskey=4mEOca&result=3&isAdvanced=false> (accessed June 16, 2017).

manifestness of those assumptions. An objection could possibly be raised that there might have been spasms of panic without Becky's knowing that these went unnoticed to the camera. However, by way of reasoning, it seems improbable that Becky would tell the audience that she had panicked knowing that the former saw her panicking.

All in all, even the contextual assumptions mentally represented on hearing the utterance in (15) possibly provide weak clues to its interpretation. Still, the viewer undertakes the comprehension process of Becky's utterance via the combination of possible explicatures, contextual assumptions, and contextual implications relevant to the semantic skeleton, from which the most likely explicature, and implicature if communicated, is arrived at. With respect to the linguistic schema *panic*, generally speaking, it is believed to enable access to a vast set of encyclopaedic information, of the nature suggested in Section 3.3. by Carston (2012), which might involve general knowledge about panicking - for instance, that there must logically be a cause that activates the feeling, that the cause is regarded negative, that panicking is driven by intuition not by rationale, otherwise there would be no panicking – it might include personal beliefs, such that only weak people panic and that panicking is not helpful and only worsens a situation, there could be socio-cultural beliefs – for instance, being English, that the stiff-upper-lip attitude should take precedence over panic – crucially, it might also evoke stereotypes, such that people who panic run around frantically or breathe into a paper bag, and, lastly, even episodic memories of one's own panicking and imagistic memories of the experience may be accessed. Restricted by the co-text and the context, some of the information becomes operative, on the basis of which an ad-hoc concept PANIC\* is derived, possibly one reworded as the verbal entry *(to) run around the kitchen frantically trying to find new ingredients to whip up new dishes that would not involve cheese*, which, with the help of the other material, participates in establishing the derived thought. It is especially with this example that the linguistic underspecificity thesis is most pronounced, given the infinitely many conceivable assumptions and thus interpretations that could be prompted by the pointer *panic*.

Another example of *panic* as a linguistic stimulus being greatly underspecified and in need of augmenting to be of the relevant interpretative value is demonstrated in (16). It has been extracted from a discussion that starts by Becky being interviewed on her partner life, on which note she expresses her interests in a long-term relationship and someone with whom it would be thinkable to have children. With respect to the response, Andy suggests that this talking about children scares her potential partners away, arguing that Becky wants a child, not a man. With respect to the preceding, Kay contributes to the debate with the utterance given below:

- (16) Kay: *I think it's 2015 and women can make their own choices. They're not the little wife at home, sit and do what their old man tells them and men **panic**, weak men **panic**, because they're gonna become extinct.*  
(S37E14, 11:12)

Supposing that the relevance-theoretic comprehension process, already outlined several times, ensues, and supposing that the pointer *panic* stimulates a chain of encyclopaedic information, some of which might resemble that provided above and, most likely, a myriad of other assumptions idiosyncratic to each individual diner at the table, the inferred thought in which the concept of PANIC\* is entertained may vastly vary. To put it differently, although all the participants share the mutual cognitive environment, where one of the assumptions regards men being scared away by their partner telling them that she wants a child, each of the participants is likely to have access to their separate, private cognitive environments, established by perceiving differently the physical environment, including the linguistic stimuli, reflected in disparate conceptualising of the reality and ergo inferences. When Kay utters (16), the mutual as well as the private cognitive environment is altered by adding a further assumption, probably one that is implicated as *Women are independent and strong nowadays, and that men cannot cope with*. The implicature is the outcome of combining the possible explicatures of the sentence in (16), contextual assumptions, and contextual implications, from which the one given above has been selected as a cognitive effect, and through which combination the explicated thought is derived where the concept PANIC\* participates. Considering Andy as a sample hearer from all the interlocutors present, again, the linguistic prompt *panic* might give access to a range of information, which, considering the context and the ongoing discourse, may result in the verbal paraphrase, for instance, *(to) chicken out and refuse to live with such a woman* being now operative in the thought duplicating the one the speaker intends to convey.

The argument having been attempted to advocate via the tokens of *struggle* and *panic*, a tentative yet plausible argument that specifically these verbs provide prompts to a vast encyclopaedic knowledge that “underspecify but constrain” (see Subchapter 3.3.) what they serve to express, is in accordance with Barsalou et al. (1993) who claims that words consist of sense and reference, with the former not being a concept but only an aspect of a corresponding concept tailored with respect to an entity in the world established in the word’s reference. That is to say, the word form might be considered a trigger to the conceptual representation with connected encyclopaedic information, from which a particular aspect is retrieved as a sense with respect to the reference. What is suggested is not that all concepts in human mind are constructed on-line and ad-hoc in the working memory, otherwise one would construct the



concept DOG, for instance, every time a particular dog was encountered; it is merely suggested that from those concepts safely and permanently saved in the long-term memory, a subset of information is constrained by the referent and accessed as the sense, so the concept represents a background against which the sense is tailored. Therefore, the lexical ad-hoc concept created through the pointer *panic* in (16), for instance, can be compared with the previous token, where each might activate diverse information from the mental concept PANIC, constrained by the situation, other linguistic stimuli, and, most essentially, the idiosyncratic conceptual organisation of each individual construed on the basis of a uniquely personal experiencing of the world. In other words, the sense of *panic* is represented differently on every time of use as the referent, the inner state referred to in this case, is changing given the changing nature of the situation. It is in this respect that the previous tokens might be considered as Clark and Clark's (1979) contextuials, because of their shifting sense as well as denotation. It is nevertheless believed that, although it is not a concept that is encoded but a pointer, something rather skeletal, the verbal prompts happen to point to a conventional conceptual template established within a speech community that is associated with a particular phonetic/graphic string. Indeed, according to Murphy (2002), despite the fact that concepts are in a way personal, hidden from others, speakers of a particular language turn out to use the same "public" words to represent comparable conceptual representations, because they learn the conventional concept-word matching (2002, 391-392):

[P]eople do not associate any old concept to a word. Instead, they learn through socialization which concepts go with which words...there is a social process of converging on meaning that is an important (and neglected) aspect of language (Clark 1996). The result of that process is that different people within a community relate words to very similar concepts. (Murphy 2002, 392)

Although Murphy (2002) is of the opinion that words encode concepts, the main idea behind the lines might be carried over to the verbal forms as prompts as well. However, it seems also possible that the encyclopaedic information connected with the prompt may sometimes override its conventional conceptual sense, as will be briefly considered in the next chapter.

#### **4.5. On potential consequences in human communication**

All things considered, the current, rather brief section will suggest a possible consequence of such hypothesis of linguistic prompts in human communication, that is, how the theory of linguistic triggers may be reflected in conversation, in understanding and misunderstanding, in agreeing and disagreeing, or simply in mutual compatibility of interlocutors.

Since it is mere hypothetical suggestion of potential consequences, only one example will be given here, namely that of the verb *abuse*:

- (17) Felix: *Yeah, that how good your memory is as far as **abusing** me earlier in the week? Have you remembered all that or has that gone away as well, because that's been really bugging me.* (S37E13, 38:28)
- (18) Felix: *The first thing I'd **struggle** with was how you ate my leftover starters. Considering the fact that you'd only just met me, I really didn't expect that.* (S37E13, 38:36)
- (19) Lynsey: *It was really really odd, because out of nowhere, Felix started talking to Shirley about us **abusing** him through the week.* (S37E13, 38:51)

As with the example of *struggle* in (12), the utterances given in (17) and (19) are provided in the same discussion of the same diners talking about getting old and losing one's memory, on which note Felix responses by (17), involving the verb *abuse*. Then, Felix utters (12), offered in (18) again for convenience sake, and with this respect, Shirley inquires whether the act of finishing other diners' dishes simply does not show the appreciation of a host's food. Afterwards, there is a cut in the video, followed by Lynsey's separate feedback only for the cameras, given in (19).

First of all, it is not certain whether producing words is a matter of unconscious, as advocated by Recanati (2004), or conscious production, as relevance theorists maintain. (cf. Recanati 2004, 38-46) Nevertheless, since one of the proposals of Relevance Theory concerning ostensive stimuli, in the case of verbal communication, linguistic utterances, is that the latter are optimally relevant when such a stimulus is "the most relevant one compatible with the communicator's abilities and preferences" (see Section 1.2.), it is assumed that the content of utterances needs to be, at least partly, conscious, as the speaker provides what she is capable of and prefers. As it is Felix who is in the role of the speaker in (17), it might be said that he consciously uses the pointer *abuse*, whose construed conceptual content participates in the thought he is attempting to communicate. As with all the tokens provided in the preceding subchapter, the pointer *abuse* might be connected to such conceptual and encyclopaedic information as socio-cultural beliefs, general knowledge, personal experiences, and episodic memories. What is crucial here is the fact that at least some of the information is singular to an individual and may diverge significantly from the knowledge thus associated with the trigger by the hearer, or, on the contrary, might include remarkably similar information. That *abuse* might be associated by Felix with information that is rather distinct from that associated with the prompt by Lynsey may be evidenced in the response of the latter, offered in (19). It is not

immediately obvious from the written example, but it is recognised only with the help of prosodic features that are observed in the video, since the verb is made prominent with a raised pitch, apparently showing Lynsey's disbelief at the word use of Felix. It is assumed that the two interlocutors may diverge in some of the encyclopaedic knowledge, which thus yields different interpreting on decoding the prompt *abuse*.

Nevertheless, since such a way of thinking is based merely on speculations, as it is not dealt with in any of the literature used, the current discussion will not proceed any further and will be left open. It remains to conclude the overall chapter, which will be done in the last section.

#### **4.6. Summary of the analytic part**

Generally speaking, the primary objective of the current chapter was to show that the phenomenon of linguistic underspecificity might be said to be existent with certain verbs in the English language, be it linguistic underspecificity or even conceptual underspecificity.

After suggesting that the truth-conditional semantics as described in the theoretical part was not applicable to natural language sentences, often involving irregular fragments and pragmatically-based features as well as unintentional nuances not always arranged to suit the purpose of the formal approach evaluating only limited scope of sentences, the verbs *kill*, *explode* and *ball* were presented to demonstrate that the meanings retrieved from the notional mental lexicon in the form of the *OED* seemed to be insufficient contributors to the truth value of their respective sentences. It was asserted that such underspecified verbs were in need of meaning augmentation via the broader, situational contexts for the sentences to be truth-evaluable.

That a pragmatic context plays the key role in determining word meaning and that a linguistic context is often unable to compensate for such a context was illustrated on the verbs *dominate*, *entertain* and *backfire*. It was pointed out that the verbs were used to express a host of meanings when merely the adjacent linguistic material was taken into consideration, and even in some cases, the co-text appeared to inadequately determine the interpretation of the particular verb. Such a claim was most pronounced with the verbs *dominate* and *ball*, where the verbal forms gained the relevant content only after the situational contexts were included, through which the picture of how Jane dominated the table and how Daniel was balled towards the plate were accessed.

With respect to the preceding proposals regarding the content of the verbs, the phenomenon of linguistic underspecificity was demonstrated with *struggle*, *panic*, and, possibly, *abuse* on the background of the relevance-driven comprehension heuristic as proposed by Sperber and

Wilson (1995). The major belief that was attempted to exemplify by the tokens was that the English verbs selected were linguistically underspecified, and even conceptually for that matter, in that what the verbs carried was approximated with a pointer or a schema on the basis of which the conceptual content was construed mainly with the help of encyclopaedic knowledge associated with the corresponding concept the verbs pointed to. It was suggested that the hearer was likely to construe the content of the particular verb variably with respect to the context at hand, the interpretation of which was thought to be rather idiosyncratic given an individual's idiosyncratic construal of the word.

Lastly, a possible consequence of such understanding of word-meaning construction was exemplified on the verb *abuse*, which was, nevertheless, provided merely as a potential way of thinking about its influence on human communication. Having summarised the overall analysis, the concluding chapter of the paper will now be provided.

## 5. Conclusion

The main argument of the thesis centred on the possibility that what is in fact decoded is not comparable with the linguistic construal of meaning, but only a linguistic prompt in the form of a verbal linguistic element, a prompt which enables access to a vast range of encyclopaedic knowledge, and which underspecifies yet constrains the pragmatically-based inferential process of constructing a concept participating in the thought sought to resemble the one the speaker attempts to communicate. It is thus believed that the lexically-encoded pointer is modified by backwards inferential process via the mutual adjustment of speculative contextual assumptions, contextual implications and explicatures, working on the semantic skeleton of a sentence. Crucially, it needs to be emphasised that it is not asserted that the argument applies to all English verbs; merely that such a phenomenon is believed to be existing, and is proposed to hold for those verbs discussed in this respect in the analytic part. Still, the idea is that the lexical concepts of the verbs are always construed in an ad-hoc manner with respect to the context of use. What is decoded is not the encoded lexical concept, as it is assumed that there is not any. It is believed that some decoding needs to take place in order for the hearer to access the relevant concept and hence encyclopaedic information. That is, the explicit proposition communicated needs to be in accordance with the semantic skeleton of a sentence; otherwise, if the work would be purely inferential, the explicit proposition might as well amount to the one suggested by Recanati (2004) that kangaroos have tails. It is also assumed that, because what encyclopaedic information is exactly chosen by a hearer to arrive at the communicated thought is an unsettled issue, the verbal stimuli appear to be highly underspecified in restricting what enters the thought derived. The verbs could be thought to serve to point to a skeletal conventional concept, which is, however, differently fine-grained in the mind of every individual.

The current thesis raises several questions: Do the hypotheses proposed hold for all verbs? How are such prompts represented in the mind? How much of the information connected with a pointer is inferred, metarepresented, or decoded? Is a conventional concept ever utilised? And, in more linguistic terms, how is such content reflected in the argumentative structure of a particular verb? However intriguing, these questions are left open for future research in the area of word meaning.

## 6. Resumé

Tato diplomová práce je zaměřena na jev jazykové podurčenosti u vybraných anglických sloves v televizní reality show *Come Dine with Me*. Hlavním cílem práce je ukázat na vybraných slovesech možnou existenci jazykové podurčenosti, kde tento jev může být charakterizován jako neschopnost jazykové jednotky, v tomto případě slovesa, adekvátně zastoupit význam, jež mluvčí zamýšlel vyjádřit na větné rovině explicitní, a kde se tato podurčenost také odráží ve skutečnosti, že na taková slovesa může být nahlíženo ne jako na slovesa nesoucí konceptuální významový obsah, nýbrž obsah ve formě pomyslného ukazatele či šablony, jež vede posluchače ke konstruování významu s pomocí daného konceptu a encyklopedických (obecných) znalostí tak, aby interpretace daného jazykového ukazatele co možná nejvíce souhlasila se zamýšleným významem mluvčího.

Obsah práce je rozdělen do dvou stěžejních částí, tedy na část teoretickou a část praktickou. Po úvodním slovu jsou v první kapitole části teoretické představeny dva klíčové přístupy k verbální komunikaci, Kooperační princip a Teorie relevance. Nejdříve je představen Griceho (1975) Kooperační princip a pod něj spadající zásady, které charakterizují lidskou komunikaci a jednotlivé jazykové kroky mluvčími pomyslně dodržované ve snaze dosáhnout komunikační součinnosti. S ohledem na fakt, že dané principy byly tak sestaveny převážně z důvodu rozřešení sporů filozofů jazyka, a ne pro lingvistické účely, podkapitola druhá se zabývá Teorií relevance, jak ji popisují Sperber a Wilson (1995). Cílem této části je především prezentovat ústřední pojmy a hlavní koncept teorie, neboť jsou základem procesu porozumění posluchače ve verbální komunikaci, a tím i interpretace slovního významu.

Diskuze kapitoly druhé se orientuje na problematiku explicitního obsahu věty, tedy co takový obsah vlastně tvoří. Nejprve je čtenář seznámen s pojetím propozice, a jak je na ni nahlíženo v souvislosti se sémantikou pravdivostních podmínek. Tato perspektiva je následně kontrastována s pohledem tzv. kontextualistů a proponentů teorie relevance. V porovnání se stoupenci sémantiky pravdivostních podmínek kontextualisté zastávají názor, že věty nejsou samy o sobě nositeli pravdivostních podmínek, nýbrž jsou jimi věty doplněné o aspekt dané situace, jinými slovy jsou jimi jazykové promluvy (utterance). V poslední řadě je prezentován názor představitelů Teorie relevance, kteří považují za nositele propozic lidské myšlenky, jelikož právě myšlenky patřičně vyjadřují zamýšlené sdělení mluvčího, jež žádný jazykový systém není schopen zachytit v patřičné úplnosti. Druhá část kapitoly druhé se zabývá problematikou explicitního obsahu věty a porovnává tzv. minimalistický náhled Grice (1975) na obsah věty jakožto nositele pravdivostních podmínek s názorem zástupců Teorie relevance,

jež předkládají tezi podurčenosti. Na rozdíl od minimalistů, kteří tvrdí, že je užito faktorů kontextu jen v případě, kdy věta sama o sobě nemůže být nositelem pravdivostních podmínek, jelikož obsahuje dvojznačné výrazy či jazykové jednotky s neurčitým referentem, zastánci Teorie relevance chápou explicitní větný obsah jako tzv. explikaturu jež je jazykově podurčenou, explicitně vyslovenou myšlenkou, která vyžaduje procesy pragmatického vyvozování pro doplnění větného obsahu tak, aby tím nositelem pravdivostních podmínek mohla být. Explikatury jsou chápány jako propozice, které mluvčí zamýšlel vyjádřit explicitně. Propozice jak ji vnímají zastánci sémantiky pravdivostních podmínek či minimalisté jako je Grice může být podle příznivců Teorie relevance propozicí, ale ne propozicí, kterou chtěl mluvčí vyjádřit. Nakonec jsou v rámci teze podurčenosti představeny možné pragmatické procesy, které posluchač podstoupí, aby dospěl k příslušné zamýšlené explikatuře.

Třetí a tím i poslední kapitola teoretické části pojednává o charakteru slovního významu. Nejdříve jsou představeny přístupy sémantiky pravdivostních podmínek a lexikální sémantiky jakožto přístupy čistě lingvistické. Sémantika pravdivostních podmínek zastává názor, že slovní význam je oddělitelný od významu spojeným s obecnými znalostmi a situačním kontextem, a že tento slovní význam, uložen v mentálním lexikonu člověka, je možno zachytit striktně danými definicemi a tzv. sémantickými primitivy. I když lexikální sémantika jak ji vidí Cruse (1986) souhlasí s existencí mentálního lexikonu s ustálenými, ale i potencionálními, lexikálními jednotkami tvořenými jednotlivými významy, takové jednotky nejsou podle autora nijak primitivní v daném slova smyslu. Crusova (1986) lexikální sémantika je založena na definování významu slov především na základě lingvistického kontextu, tedy skutečného i potencionálního jazykového materiálu, s kterým dané slovo vstupuje do syntagmatických a paradigmatických vztahů. Co je důležité, podle Cruse (1986) je možné oddělit význam sémantický a pragmatický, neboť daný lingvistický kontext je schopen úplně zachytit aspekty pragmatického kontextu. V části druhé třetí kapitoly jsou představeny argumenty proti názoru, že je možné oddělit ústřední význam od vlivů širšího kontextu. Recanati (2004) prohlašuje, že slova jsou tzv. sémanticky podurčená, neboli slovní význam obecně je sémanticky podurčený vzhledem ke své variabilní podstatě, a závisí tak na pragmatických procesech. V souvislosti s tím je v této části také představena myšlenka, že slova nejsou nositeli jazykového významu, ale nositeli konceptu, tedy mentální jednotky, která spolu s dalšími tvoří obsah lidských myšlenek.

Takto vnímaný význam slova je v předposlední části třetí kapitoly diskutován s ohledem na proces porozumění řízený principem relevance. Tato část představuje pojetí konceptu proponenty Teorie relevance jako nedělitelné mentální jednotky spojené s tzv. logickým,

encyklopedickým a lexikálním záznamem, jehož lexikální protějšek, lexikální koncept, je zakódován plnovýznamovými slovy jazykového systému. Jak zastánci Teorie relevance tvrdí, během verbální komunikace tento lexikální koncept podstupuje tzv. proces vzájemného paralelního uzpůsobení, ve kterém jsou předpokládané explikatury, implikatury a kontextové domněnky kombinovány a lexikální koncept tak přizpůsoben zamýšlené výpovědi zpětným vyvozováním. Na základě možného přizpůsobení daného konceptu vzhledem ke komunikačnímu záměru mluvčího vzniká tzv. ad-hoc koncept. V souvislosti s tím se zbývající část třetí podkapitoly zabývá různými a vskutku odlišnými názory na charakter zakódovaného konceptu slova a konečně tak hypotézou, že lingvistické jednotky mohou být vnímány jako nositelé tzv. schémat, šablon či ukazatelů, na jejichž základě posluchač konstruuje příslušný koncept, který má mluvčí v úmyslu vyjádřit.

Čtvrtou kapitolu tvoří část vlastního bádání. Ta je stručně uvedena cílem práce, obsahem analytické části, hypotézami utvořenými na základě literatury uvedené v teoretické části, a v neposlední řadě jsou uvedena také rizika analýzy daného charakteru. Po úvodní části následuje krátké představení televizní reality show, ze které byla zkoumaná slovesa vybrána. Posléze je přikročeno k vlastnímu zkoumání, počínaje úvahou nad realizovatelností sémantiky pravdivostních podmínek. V první řadě je diskutována aplikovatelnost daného formálního přístupu na přirozený jazyk. V druhé řadě je pak poukázáno na problematiku prisuzování větám statut nositele pravdivostních podmínek vzhledem k tomu, že je pravdivostní hodnota věty tvořena z jejích částí, jimiž jsou slova se striktně definovaným významem bez ohledu na kontext užití. V této části je demonstrováno, že sloveso ve striktně skeletálním formátu dostatečně nepřispívá k pravdivosti dané věty, a tím i jejímu významu.

V části druhé čtvrté kapitoly je snahou prokázat, že lingvistický kontext se zdá být nedostačující pro vhodnou interpretaci příslušných sloves. Tato část především poukazuje na fakt demonstrován na vybraných slovesech, že lingvistický kontext je nedostatečným faktorem pro určení náležité interpretace daného slovesa. Záměrem je především prokázat, že širší kontext, nejen ten lingvistický, je neoddělitelnou součástí pro tvorbu slovního významu.

V ústřední části třetí čtvrté kapitoly je pak analyzován jev jazykové podurčenosti u vybraných anglických sloves v souladu s relevancí řízeným heuristickým procesem interpretace. Zkoumána jsou především slovesa *struggle* a *panic* jako příklady sloves, o kterých je možno říci, že spadají do kategorie slov jakožto ukazatelů či schémat pro utvoření významu, založeném na příslušném konceptu a encyklopedických informací s ním spojenými. Vzhledem k vysoce individuálním kognitivním schopnostem a schopnostem vnímání, člověk osobitě konstruuje fyzické prostředí a tím i utváří ojedinělá mínění a dohady ohledně dané situace, do



které spadá i jazykový projev mluvčího. I když jazykový ukazatel vymezuje, s pomocí aktuálního diskurzu a kontextu domněnek, kterým směrem se pravděpodobně může takové tvoření významu ubírat, výsledná interpretace slovesného významu se může díky této jazykové podurčenosti lišit. Toto chápání tvoření významu by znamenalo, že pragmatické vyvozování obsahu slovesa by již nebylo možným, nýbrž nutným procesem pro jeho interpretaci, a tím by se každé formování příslušného konceptu spojeného se slovesem stalo ad-hoc procesem.

Předposlední část kapitoly čtvrté obsahuje krátkou úvahu nad možnými dopady takového smýšlení nad tvorbou významu v lidské komunikaci. Přesto, že se jedná pouze o předložení možnosti, která není podpořena žádným ze zdrojů užití literatury a je tak vysoce spekulativní domněnkou, není považována za nepravděpodobnou.

Celá část praktická je zakončena shrnutím této části, kde jsou sumarizovány veškeré poznatky. Diplomová práce je pak zakončena vlastním závěrem, který obsahuje celkové shrnutí a zamyšlení nad danou problematikou.

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<https://openload.co/f/LebSvuAwmhQ/Come.Dine.With.Me.S40E09.HDTV.x264-GTi.mp4>.

## 8. Appendix

All the verbal tokens are summarised in the chronological order as were offered in the analytic part.

- (1) Philip absolutely **killed** her with that with the baby-food comment. Ehm, I don't think any of us disagreed either. (S37E18, 27:25)
- (2) Quite hard. I put my fork and knife in it and it just **exploded** everywhere. (S37E18, 07:15)
- (3) I did feel as if I was being literally **balled** towards the ball ehm given its gravitational field that was that big. (S40E25, 29:31)
- (4) Ehm, my action plan for dealing with Jane tonight is to fill her up with food, fill her up with a lot of food, so if she's she's eating, she can't be talking and **dominate** the table. (S37E23, 33:33)
- (5) Surely, we all laughed at me, we were all **entertained** by me. So, has that not made your week more enjoyable? (S25E25, 14:10)
- (6) We're doing some orange juice, something a little bit different. This may **backfire**, but damned sure this is the way to go with this couscous. (S37E18, 08:54)
- (7) I was mentioning how nice the coulis was and ehm, obviously, it went wrong for me, it **backfired**. (S37E25, 19:04)
- (8) I really think this looks lovely. I really **struggle** with goat's cheese. I will try my best because it looks so lovely and I don't want to offend thee. (S37E13, 07:19)
- (9) The first thing I'd **struggle** with was how you ate my leftover starters. Considering the fact that you'd only just met me, I really didn't expect that. (S37E13, 38:36)
- (10) Do you **struggle** with things in your beard? (S37E18, 07:28)
- (11) I'm just so happy that they like cheese, 'cause literally I **panicked** till about three o'clock this afternoon in case they didn't like cheese. So, yeah, it's going really well. (S37E14, 07:30)
- (12) I think it's 2015 and women can make their own choices. They're not the little wife at home, sit and do what their old man tells them and men **panic**, weak men **panic**, because they're gonna become extinct. (S37E14, 11:12)
- (13) Yeah, that how good your memory is as far as **abusing** me earlier in the week? Have you remembered all that or has that gone away as well, because that's been really bugging me. (S37E13, 38:28)
- (14) It was really really odd, because out of nowhere, Felix started talking to Shirley about us **abusing** him through the week. (S37E13, 38:51)