

Conversational implicature

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Linguist 130a/230a: Introduction to semantics and pragmatics



Definition

Speaker S saying utterance U to listener L conversationally implicates q if, and only if,

- ① S and L mutually, publicly presume that S is obeying the cooperative principle.
- ② To maintain ① given U , it must be supposed that S thinks that q .
- ③ S thinks that both S and L mutually, publicly presume that L is willing and able to work out that ② holds.

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Relevance-based

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Ann: What city does Paul live in?

Bob: Hmm ... he lives in California.

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Ann: What city does Paul live in?

Bob: Hmm ... he lives in California.

Conversational implicature: Bob does not know which city Paul lives in.

- ① *Contextual premise:* Ann and Bob are planning a trip, and both are open to visiting Paul.
- ② Assume Bob is cooperative at least insofar as he is forthcoming about where Paul lives.

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Ann: What city does Paul live in?

Bob: Hmm ... he lives in California.

Conversational implicature: Bob does not know which city Paul lives in.

- ① *Contextual premise:* Ann and Bob are planning a trip, and both are open to visiting Paul.
- ② Assume Bob is cooperative at least insofar as he is forthcoming about where Paul lives.
- ③ Bob supplied less information than was required, seemingly contradicting ② .

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Ann: What city does Paul live in?

Bob: Hmm ... he lives in California.

Conversational implicature: Bob does not know which city Paul lives in.

- ① *Contextual premise: Ann and Bob are planning a trip, and both are open to visiting Paul.*
- ② *Assume Bob is cooperative at least insofar as he is forthcoming about where Paul lives.*
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- ④ *Assume Bob does not know which city Paul lives in.*

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- ⑤ Then Bob's answer is optimal given his evidence.

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Adjectival scales

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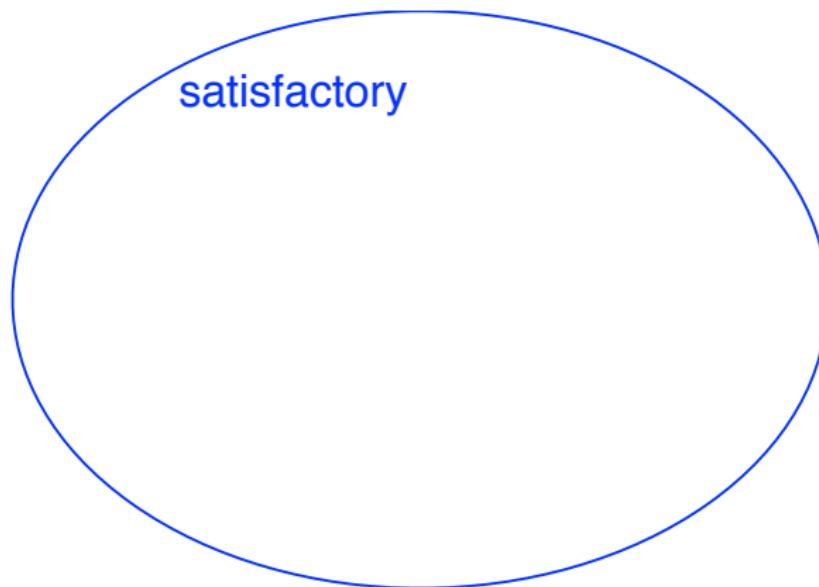
A: Sandy's work this term was satisfactory.

Implicature: Sandy's work was not excellent (= *not-q*)

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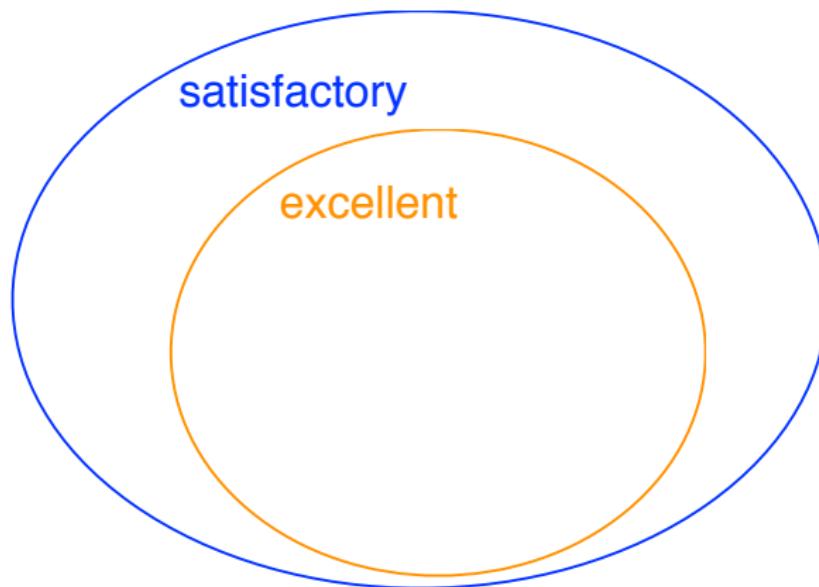
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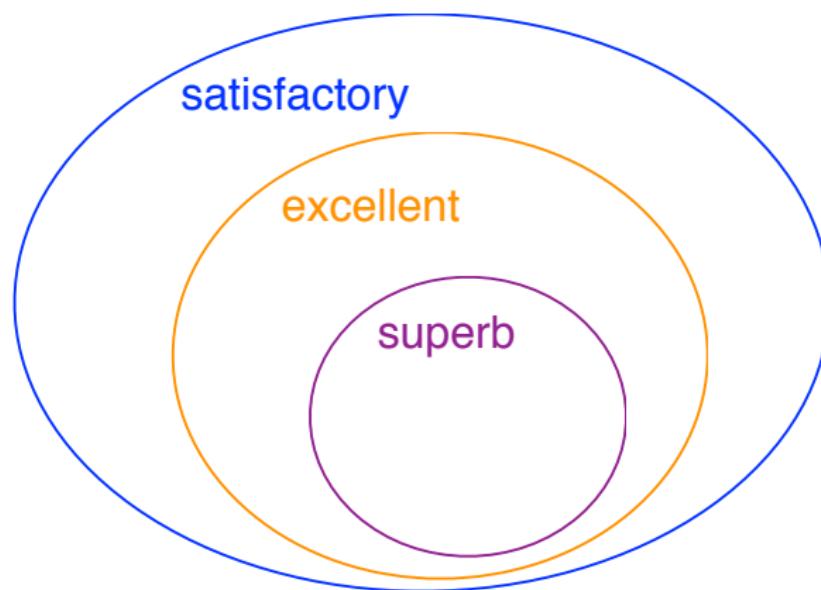
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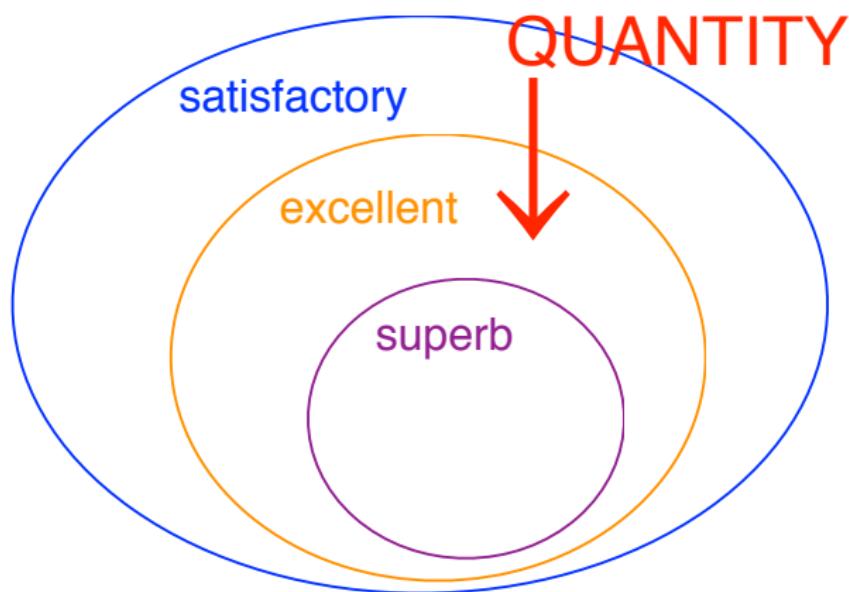
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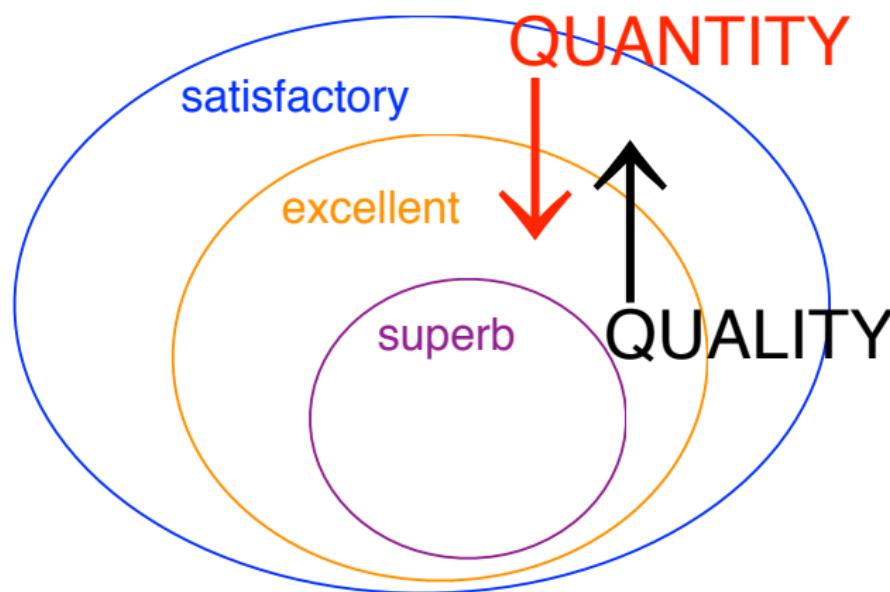
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