

ISSA Proceedings 2014 - How To Put It Vaguely

Abstract: The paper examines speakers' possible goals in employing vague expressions in a gas bill, as well the harmful effects such expressions can have on addressees (i.e. consumers). The paper tries to demonstrate that vagueness does not exclusively boil down to lexical vagueness, i.e. uninformative words (Channell 1994). Vagueness also means not explicitating relevant information but giving them as presupposed, the speaker taking for granted that the addressee is already familiar with such content.

Keywords: Gas Bills, Grice, Cooperation Principle, Presupposition, Vagueness, Violations of conversational maxims, Withholding information.

1. *Introduction*

1.1 *Vagueness*

The notion of vagueness has been mainly investigated in philosophy (Russell 1923; Keefe 2000) with the challenge posed by the Sorite Paradox: how many sand grains make a "sorite", a heap of sand? In semantics it is recognized that fuzzy boundaries are a characteristic of words. Take for instance Labov's (1973) continuous transition between cups and bowls; the borderline between them is not clear-cut, but fuzzy and graded. As Anolli (2001) puts it, things deviate progressively from a standard (or prototypical) type, and we enter a semantic vagueness zone, where the same object could be, in turn, a bowl, a mug or a glass.

Besides the researchers' interest in the intrinsic vagueness of terms, scholars in pragmatics started to focus on the art of being vague in communication. Research started to be conducted in order to investigate how ordinary language leaves room for people to be vague, to avoid precision and the commitment associated with. Studies - mainly in English (Crystal & Davy (1979); Prince et al. (1982); Channell (1994); Cutting (2007), but also on Romance languages (Mihatsch 2007; Voghera 2013) and Chinese (Drave 2000) proved that one of the ways speakers demonstrate their competence is through their use of a degree of vagueness which is right for the purpose of the linguistic context. According to whether they

are involved in a gossipy chat, an interview, a student - professor interaction (Channell 1994), a conversation with a doctor colleague about the state of a patient (Prince et al. 1982) or even in a written context, speakers are perfectly able to tailor their language by varying the precision and vagueness level to make it suitable to the situation (Channell 1994: 4). As a matter of fact, vague expressions occur both in spoken and written language, but given the fact that they tend to induce an 'informal flavour' to communication, they are more frequent in oral rather than written contexts. Channell (1994:18) distinguishes between three different ways in which speakers can avoid being precise or exact. These are: *vague additives* (adding a word/phrase to what would otherwise be a precise statement, so that it results in a vague reading: 'a team of *around* 10 people'; 'maybe a little bit of stone or *something like that*'); vague words (words which are always, and unabashedly vague, such as *thingummy*, *whatsit*. For quantities, there exist such terms as *loads of*, *heaps of*); and at last, *vagueness by implicature* (when an apparently precise sentence can be used and understood to have a vague meaning, as for instance 'Sam is 6 feet tall', sentence which can be understood as both precise ('Sam is 6 feet tall') and vague ('He is actually 6 foot and a quarter of inch') and where the vagueness seemingly consists precisely in not knowing whether the utterance is to be interpreted as precise or approximate.

Channell's main contribution is having showed that, in contexts where less precision is judged to be required, vague expressions can be used to tailor the amount of information given according to the perceived purposes of the interaction". According to the author, therefore, "vagueness in language is neither all 'bad' nor all 'good', what matters is that vague language is used appropriately (Channell 1994: 3).

1.2 *Uses and goals of vague language*

Along with the function of tailoring utterances such that the right amount of information is given (for instance not providing precise information in a context where approximate information would do), vague language also enables speakers to talk about a topic they are not very knowledgeable about or they do not have the necessary vocabulary (Channell 1994: 170). When this is case, markers of the type: 'or things like that'; 'or something', 'and the like' help speakers to find a way of actually talking about something they do not quite have the vocabulary to express; signalling at the same time the speaker's lack of knowledge to the interlocutor.

Another possible use of vague language is deliberately withholding information which might be expected by the hearer in a given situation. According to Channell (1994), the speaker can withhold information either for deceitful reasons (or simply reasons of personal privacy), or as a defensive tactic to avoid committing himself to a precise reply.

A possible case of defending one's privacy or even intentionally deceiving the other, can be illustrated by a very pertinent and amusing example taken by Channell from a Boopsie cartoon strip. Boopsie, asked by her conversational partner (possibly her partner in life as well) what she has bought from Elvis' memorial house (A: 'Did you buy a postcard or something?'), responds with a very vague formulation (B: 'Or something...'), letting the interlocutor infer that what she actually bought is much more than a postcard. By withholding, that is, not giving information which the speaker (here Boopsie) possesses and which questioner expects to receive, the speaker performs a violation of the Quantity maxim and triggers implicatures" (Channell 1994:179).

The speaker may opt for a vague reply also when putting in practice a defensive tactic. If asked for instance something like 'When is the work going to be done?', one can say something like "Well the quote might be done within three or four days but the job won't be done for at least five weeks" **[i]**) authorizing the hearer to infer that a precise date cannot be provided as the speaker does not know how much time the job will exactly take.

In both cases, either deceitful or simply not wanting to commit, from the listener's perspective the speaker's reply can be seen as unhelpful and insufficiently informative and possibly trigger implicatures.

In a similar vein to Channell (1994), Poggi & Vincze (2012); Vincze et al. (2013) see vagueness as determined by a lack of detail in what one knows or in what one decides to communicate about a certain topic. Namely, according to Vincze et al. (2013) one may be vague either because one personally has vague knowledge (*no power to be precise*), or, although having detailed information, one does not want to reveal it to the listener (*no goal to be precise*) because possibly harmful, either for the Interlocutor (*take the case of negative diagnoses*), or for himself. On the basis of whether the speaker chooses to withhold information to protect the interlocutor or himself, Vincze et al. (2013) distinguish between altruistic and selfish goals of vagueness. If the latter is the case, the speaker may be guilty of

concealing relevant information for the interlocutor, i.e. of deceitful behaviour (Castelfranchi & Poggi 1998).

2. *Presuppositions*

In view of our case study analysis in Section 3, together with the concept of vagueness, we also want to introduce the concept of *presupposition*, a concept primarily investigated in philosophy and linguistics.

Before moving on, we first have to distinguish between presuppositions as intended in ordinary usage (as for instance 'John wrote Harry a letter, *presupposing* he could read'), and the technical notion of presupposition, "restricted to some pragmatic inferences or assumptions that seem at least to be built into linguistic expressions and which can be isolated using specific linguistics tests, (especially, traditionally, constancy under negation[**ii**])" (Levinson 1983:168).

The first philosopher dealing with the concept of presupposition is Frege (1892). As stated by Frege,

If anything is asserted, there is always an obvious presupposition that the simple or compound proper names used have a reference. If one therefore asserts 'Kepler died in misery', there is a presupposition that the name 'Kepler' designates something. That the name 'Kepler' designates something is just as much a presupposition of the assertion 'Kepler died in misery' as for the contrary [i.e. negative] assertion [Kepler did not die in misery]. (Frege, 1892 (1952:69).

We see how a presupposition is something the speaker assumes to be the case before even making an utterance. Namely, an utterance such as '*Kepler died in misery*', presupposes that '*Kepler has/had a referent in real life*'. i.e. that Kepler does/did exist. Besides presupposing that '*Kepler has/had a referent in real life*', an utterance like '*Kepler died in misery*' presupposes as well that Kepler can be univocally identified by both speaker and hearer (Levinson 1993:186).

Linguists over time came up with a list of linguistic forms which are considered to be indicators of potential presupposition (Karttunen 1971 mentions a list of 31 such presupposition triggers). Definite description is one of them. Any referent encoded by a definite article + noun, definite pronoun, definite possessor + noun, or proper noun is presupposed to exist. The very presence of such definite descriptions presupposes both the existence of the referent, as well as the fact

that the referent is represented in both speaker and hearer's mind. By means of presupposition speakers avoid foregrounding that which they have no reason to foreground, presupposition representing a necessary condition for language to function in everyday world.

To illustrate a case of presupposition triggered by definite descriptions (here in the form of a proper noun and a definite possessor + noun), let us choose the same straightforward example as in footnote (2):

'Anne's dog is cute',

where it is presupposed that Anne exists and that Anne has a dog. At the same time, it is also presupposed (by the speaker) that Anne and her dog are familiar to both speaker and hearer. If it hadn't been so, the speaker would have provided further information on Anne, to guarantee the interlocutor's understanding. We can therefore state that taken into account that the speaker does not come up with further information on Anne's account, he takes for granted that the interlocutor is familiar with the person at issue (of course, he sometimes may be wrong).

This is very much in line with a pragmatic theory of presupposition, having at its basis concepts such as *appropriateness* (felicity) and *mutual knowledge* (or common ground or joint assumption).

"An utterance A pragmatically presupposes a proposition B iff A is appropriate only if B is mutually known by the participants". (Levinson 1983:205).

It is worth recalling Levinson's point concerning the concepts of appropriateness and mutual knowledge at the basis of pragmatic presuppositions. Levinson (1983) points out that it is not inappropriate for the speaker to state something like

'I am sorry I'm late, my car broke down'

even though the hearer did not previously know that the speaker possessed a car. A presupposition such as 'Speaker has a car and drove to the meeting point', although not initially part of speaker/hearer shared knowledge, is assumingly part of the more general mutual knowledge that

'Average people do possess a car (which can sometimes break down)'.

It is interesting to note that the following utterance

'I am sorry I'm late, my fire-engine broke down'

is probably not appropriate in circumstances where it is not mutual knowledge that the following presupposition is true:

'Speaker has a fire engine'

As Levinson (1983) points out, this is so because it is not consistent with the average man's beliefs that average people own fire engines.

Although inappropriate, presuppositional constructions are sometimes used even though the presupposition is not part of the "shared background" of the two interactants (whether the speaker knows it or not). Moreover, there are other cases when speakers "deliberately put [new information] in a background position - thus in a sense it is shielded from challenge" (Givón 1989). In the same line, Eco & Violi (1987) argue that with presuppositions "we are not so much interested in what is-the-case, but rather in what someone tries to make someone else believe to be the case". And again, "through presupposition the speaker/writer frequently rhetorically constructs a background rather than simply responds to one that is already there" (Hardy 2003: 54).

3. A case study: bills and vague referents

Bills are a type of informative texts whose role is to inform consumers about their payment obligations (precise amount to pay as well as payment deadlines). In case of service shut off for non-payment, the consumer has to be able to find on the bill information on the re-connect fee and deposit[**iii**]. Such relevant information should be provided on the bill and the consumer shouldn't have any difficulty in finding them. Nonetheless, this is not always the case.

I will analyse below a real example of a gas bill where by means of a definite presuppositional construction, not previously given information is put in a background position, the utility provider taking for granted that the consumer is abreast of the presupposed content. The following extract is taken from a gas bill issued by E-on, a German provider of natural gas in Romania, among other countries. I will analyse a reference E-on makes to a governmental decision, GD 1043/2004, formulation that can be qualified as vague and that has the effect of leaving the consumer puzzled. I argue that E-on's communication can be seen as

a case of possibly deliberately withholding information which is relevant for the addressee, and therefore as a case of selfish vagueness (Poggi & Vincze 2011; Vincze et al. 2012). Vagueness does not exclusively boil down to lexical vagueness and uninformative words; vagueness also means not stating information (relevant for the hearer) and giving them as presupposed, as taken for granted.

In my analysis of E-on communication, I make use of the two concepts introduced above, presuppositions and deliberately vague communication, trying to establish a link between the two.

Let us take a look at the content of the bill. After having informed the consumer of being at risk of gas shut-off for nonpayment, the utility provider goes on listing the re-connect conditions in case the consumer is confronted with a gas shut-off.

“Gas will be turned on again once the bill, the late payments interests and the re-connect fee are entirely paid and once a *deposit equivalent to the gas consumption determined according to GD[iv] 1043/2004 is constituted [by the consumer]*”.

Let us focus on the last part of the sentence signalled in italics, more precisely on the part mentioning a deposit to be paid according to a certain GD 1043/2004. This part of the sentence presupposes[v] that there is a deposit and there is a GD 1043/2004 which regulates the amount of the deposit to be paid. The author of the text may also hold the more specific presupposition that the reader is abreast of the provisions of the governmental decision 1043/2004.

These presuppositions present in the bill are problematic because it is not mutual knowledge between all participants in the exchange (E-on and average bill payers) that GD 1043/2004 even exists, let alone the content of its provisions[vi].

The reader is therefore invited to construct the background knowledge that would justify the presupposition (i.e. that GD 1043/2004 exists) and moreover, to come up with GD 1043/2004 provisions. But while consumers, on the basis of an inferential process, are able to come up with the presupposition that GD 1043/2004 does exist, they cannot come up (or at least not on the spot, without a documented research through the database of governmental decisions, or, if inspired enough, through the contract signed with E-on) with its provisions[vii]. This second type of presupposition (concerning GD 1043/2004 provisions) can be classified as a *marked presupposition*[viii] (Hardy 2003: 54), i.e. involving new

information which cannot be deduced from previous information. It is unreasonable to assume that the consumer would know about the governmental decision GD 1043/2004 and be familiar with its provisions. One would expect that such important information for the consumer, although specified in the distant contract, would not be presupposed in the bill (the only piece of document accurately read by the consumer).

3.1 *Possible goals in using GD 1043/2004 abbreviation*

As Vallauri & Masia (2014) observe concerning presuppositions, “the act of informing the addressee is absent, or more accurately it is skipped and treated as not necessary” (Vallauri & Masia 2014:162). In our case as well, E-on envisages a world where the addressee already knows about the existence of GD 1043/2004 as well as its content. This being the case, there is no need to assert it again, but just resuming it for the sake of understanding the rest will do the job (Vallauri & Masia 2014: 162). E-on behaves as full explicitation of some already-known content would be the superfluous repetition of some information the consumer already knows.

Vallauri & Masia (2014) come up with several hypotheses – some benevolent and some less – to explain why the speaker/writer would not invest effort in fully explicating content taken for granted. Such a strategy may be aimed at:

(1) *“saving the addressee superfluous effort, because that content is already known to her/him;*

(2) *saving the addressee superfluous effort, because that content can be processed with minor attention without any damage to the comprehension of the message;*

(3) *preventing the addressee from becoming completely aware of (all the parts of) that content, lest (s)he may challenge and reject it. Presupposition weakens the tendency to critical reaction”.*

(Vallauri & Masia 2014: 165)

Let's examine these three cases one by one.

A possible reason why speakers/writers resort to presuppositions is *economy of effort*. When some information is already in the knowledge of the addressee, the speaker is entitled to present it as presupposed. Let's take for instance the above-

mentioned example 'Anne's dog is cute'. If the speaker believed that the addressee weren't familiar with Anne and her dog, he would have said something like 'There is a girl I know, she is called Anne and she has a cute dog'. Having instead chosen presupposing triggers such as proper names and possessive determiners, 'Anne's dog is cute', indicates both that the speaker is entitled to believe that the addressee knows about the existence of Anne and her dog, as well as the fact that the piece of information that truly deserves the hearer's attention, is the dog's cuteness (and not the fact that Anne has a dog, which might actually be new information for the hearer).

This way the hearer will pay much less attention to the presupposed content because "it comes with the 'warning' that it does not need thorough examination, being something already known to her/him [...] while full examination of already-known content would be a superfluous repetition of some effort that one has done in the past" (Vallauri & Masia 2014: 163).

But what if the information presupposed by the sender is not stored in the knowledge of the addressee, can we still grant the benefit of the doubt to the sender or should his strategy be seen as malevolent and damaging the addressee? According to (Vallauri & Masia 2014), in most of the cases, although the presupposed content is not familiar to the addressee, we can still consider that the speaker's non explicit mention can be aimed at saving superfluous effort to both addressee and sender, as the content at issue is not that important and doesn't jeopardize the overall comprehension of the message.

A message on a piece of paper left by the wife on the kitchen table 'Heat the stew in the oven' is adequately processed by the husband, although he did not previously know that his wife had prepared stew for dinner.

This is just one possible example of possible presuppositions put into place by speakers in everyday conversations, presuppositions that although they play something off and present it as taken for granted (while actually unknown to the addressee), at the same time, they do not jeopardize in any way the comprehension of the message from the part of this latter.

As Vallauri & Masia (2014) mention, there are nonetheless cases when the sender, in his playing off details, has less honourable intentions. As they put it,

"Presenting information as not to be processed thoroughly although it is actually

unknown to the addressee may be aimed not only at allowing the addressee some economy of effort, but also at avoiding full understanding of that information on the part of the addressee” (Vallauri & Masia 2014: 163)

3.2 *Expliciting information - a risky business*

Knowing that consumers are not aware of the conditions of the Governmental Decision regulating the deposit, E-on should have said the following:

There is a Governmental Decision 1043/2004 which regulates the amount of the deposit to be paid in case of gas shut off. The amount of the deposit is calculated at the current market price of natural gas, including VAT. The quantity of gas calculated for the purpose of the deposit consists of 300 metre cubed gas, which amounts to XXXX Lei[**ix**]. The deposit will be seized for 2 years and will be returned to the consumer after the end of this period.

which represents the conditions stipulated by GD 1043/2004 and present on the E-on contract. But such a formulation is very likely to capture the consumer’s attention because alarming. Instead, a message stated in the following way might evade more easily the reader’s attention.

“Gas will be turned on again once the bill, the late payments interests and the re-connect fee are entirely paid and once a deposit equivalent to the gas consumption determined according to GD 1043/2004 is constituted [by the consumer]”.

Reference to the GD 1043/ 2004 is made *en passant*, not to attract attention on the negative consequences having to pay such a deposit would have for the consumer. Nonetheless, due to such a formulation, E-on is on the safe side: they can’t be accused of not having quoted the governmental decision (where the exact amount of metre cubes is specified, as well as the period of time this deposit will be seized by the service provider). E-on’s formulation violates the cooperative principles of communication, where interactants are supposed to collaborate to reach a maximally effective exchange of information.

4. *Violating gricean maxims*

According to Grice (1975), speakers (generally) observe a Cooperative Principle, i.e. they conceive their utterances in such a way to contribute towards a maximally effective exchange of information. The cooperation principle is divided in four maxims (Quantity, Quality, Relevance, Manner) describing specific rational

principles observed by people who obey the cooperative principle. “The conversational maxims [...] are specially connected with the particular purposes that talk (and so, talk exchange) is adapted to serve and it is primarily employed to serve” (Grice 1975)

If we look at the bill fragment under analysis from the perspective of the Cooperative Principle, we notice some maxim violations.

As already mentioned, E-on does not state on the bill the amount in Lei of the deposit demanded by the company in case of shut off for non-payment, but simply makes reference to the governmental decision 1043/2004. As we saw, on the contract stipulated between the provider and the consumer, E-on specifies that the deposit is equivalent to 300 m³ of gas as well as the fact that the “value of the deposit is calculated on the basis of natural gas prices (VAT included) in force the day of the constitution of the deposit”. Considering that the price of 1 m³ can be subjected to changes due to gas market price and euro fluctuations, the company’s choice of not stating an exact amount (on the contract) can be seen as a self-protection strategy against approximate or inaccurate declarations. If we accept this hypothesis, E-on can be considered to respect the Quality maxim, i.e. not saying something for which one lacks adequate evidence.

The Quantity Maxim instead (‘Make your contribution as informative as it required for the current purposes of the exchange’ and ‘Do not make your contribution more informative than is required’) is overtly violated. By referring to the Governmental Decision, they appear to be rigorous and precise. The consumer would have nonetheless settled with a more ‘informal’ notice of how much the deposit amounts to (expressed for instance in cubed metres, as in GD 1043/2004 and as in the contract). We see how, on the one side, by referring to the Governmental Decision, E-on goes beyond the precision threshold required by the addressee, while at the same time they don’t reach it: what they fail to mention on the bill is precisely what the consumer requires to know: the amount of the deposit to pay in case of service shut off.

Considering that what the deposit amounts to has already been indicated twice (on the contract stipulated between E-on and consumer, as well as in the Governmental Decision 1043/2004 they refer to), E-on might have considered that saying it again would be redundant, over informative. But the bill is precisely the context where one expects to be informed on all the payment obligations.

According to Grice, being over informative is not even a transgression of the Cooperation Principle, but merely a waste of time (Grice 1975:26). Not giving the required information in the required context, can be instead seen as a violation of the CP.

Making reference to a Governmental Decision when one expects to find out the amount of the deposit, can be seen as a violation of the relevance manner as well. As Grice puts it, "I expect a partner's contribution to be appropriate to the immediate needs at each stage of the transaction. If I am mixing ingredients for a cake, I do not expect to be handed a good book [...]" Grice 1975: 28. Moreover, considering that the consumer can't be expected to be familiar with such technical notions as GD 1043/2004, employing such a terminology in a document which is supposed to have an informative purpose, can be seen as an obscure expression, and therefore a violation of the Manner maxim.

5. Conclusion

In this paper I examined what communicative effects arise from using vague expressions, as well as speakers' possible goals in employing such expressions. Vagueness does not exclusively boil down to lexical vagueness and uninformative words, vagueness also means not stating information (relevant for the hearer) and giving them as presupposed, as taken for granted.

As highlighted by van Eemeren & Grootendorst (1992), in everyday conversation and argumentation, many premises are presupposed and left unexpressed as they go without saying. Advancing them in full word would be superfluous and hence inefficient, as it overloads speech and can even irritate the hearer if in the argumentation all sorts of things were advanced explicitly that the listener was already well aware of or could work out for himself. Nonetheless, certain elements are sometimes with less noble intentions omitted while the speaker behaves as if they were self-evident while something that has been presented as self-evident need, of course, not always be so. (van Eemeren & Grootendorst 1992: 141)

In our E-on bill, it cannot be said whether the omitting has been *intentional or not*, but its consequences are no doubt harmful for the interlocutor. Not explicitly mentioning what GD 1043/2004 implies, the consumer is not alerted on the fact that, in case he is subjected to service shut off, he will be demanded a two-year deposit which amounts to the equivalent of 300 cubed metres of gas (around 100

euro).

Also justified by the fact that the GD 1043/2004 regulations have already been listed on the contract, E-on hold that they can afford to mention *en passant* the governmental decision on the bill, taking for granted that the consumer already knows what it implies.

Having instead expressed the GD 1043/2004 regulations explicitly, would have implied that they weren't treated as information already stored in the knowledge of the addressee, but as new information. But having treated the information as unknown to the hearer goes against E-on's interests as our attention is generally much more stimulated by new information than by old ones.

Smuggling in unknown content by means of presuppositions has the advantage (for the speaker) of making new content appear less flashy. The use of an obscure formulation such as GD 1043/2004 has the communicative effect of creating a smokescreen round the deposit. But let us not forget that the communicative function of a bill is that of informing consumers on their payment obligations and possible risks they meet with in case of non-payment. All this makes the use of presuppositions in informative texts possibly even more detrimental than in other types of contexts.

As a matter of fact, in contexts where precision is not of primary concern, using vague formulations does not damage anyone. Clearly, though, there are other contexts (like financial contexts) where knowing the exact amount is extremely relevant. Channell makes a distinction between contexts where vagueness by means of approximation is tolerated and even encouraged by listeners (informal contexts where too much information doesn't contribute in any way to listeners understanding) and contexts which demand the use of precision and in which being told exact numbers, does get the addressee further (such as stock market reports; radio programs whose purpose is to inform listeners the usual prices of consumer goods; economic newspapers). Utility bills represent another context where full explicitation is not seen as overinformative, but on the contrary, it is required in order to ensure readers' full understanding.

To E-on's possible counter-argumentation '*Ignorantia juris non excusat*', one could reply that there are so many governmental decisions that no conscientious citizen (or even a conscientious legislator, lawyer, or judge) could possibly know

what they require. Repetita iuvant and on this basis one is justified to require more precision from E-on, although this implies being repetitive and seemingly violating economy principles.

NOTES

i. (Channell 1994:178)

ii. Constancy under negation is one of most common linguistic tests to identify presuppositions. It checks whether the presupposition of statement remains constant (i.e., still true) even if the statement is negated. Let's take for instance the following statement 'Anne's dog is cute' where it is presupposed that Anne exists and that she has a dog. If we instead negate the statement, like in 'Anne's dog is not cute', the same thing holds true, that is, it still presupposes that Anne exists and she has a dog.

iii. In case of service terminated for non-payment, besides the re-connect tax, a utility service provider may also charge a deposit to turn back on the service.

iv. Governmental Decision

v.

vi. Truth be told, GD 1043/2004 regulations are specified on the contract (but not on the bill). Hence E-on can be seen as having attempted to inform the consumer on this issue at the moment of signing the contract. Nonetheless, considering that users are known to sign contracts without a prior detailed reading of each section of the contract, we can say that there is no real attempt to establish shared knowledge between the two parts from E-on's side. Moreover, the fact that E-on did not repeat such regulations on the bill (which is the only informative act the consumer is known to consult for payment clarifications), and did nothing but simply referred to the governmental decision as if the consumer were already familiar with its regulations, cannot be seen as an attempt from E-on to establish shared knowledge between the two parts.

vii. i.e. that the deposit consists of 300 metre cubed gas, which amounts to approximately 100 Euro and that the deposit will be returned to the consumer two years after.

viii. Hardy (2003) applies the concept of marked presuppositions in the field of narration analysis and characterizes marked presuppositions as presuppositions 'in which the narratee or listener does not share background knowledge signalled by the narrator or speaker.

ix. Romanian currency

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