Introduction

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The publication of *Relevance: Communication and Cognition* by Dan Sperber and Deirdre Wilson in 1986 initiated a new phase in the study of the human capacity for communication and comprehension (i.e. pragmatics), with significant implications for cognition and interpretation more broadly. It was named as one of the most important and influential books of the decade in the *Times Higher Educational Supplement*. Since then, the ideas that Sperber and Wilson presented in this very influential book have been considerably refined and developed, by both Sperber and Wilson themselves and many others. A number of subsequent publications (Carston & Uchida 1998; Rouchota & Jucker 1998; Padilla Cruz 2016) have presented updates on the achievements of the relevance-theoretic research programme. Our collection demonstrates the ongoing influence of the ideas presented in the 1986 book and the diversity and range of research it continues to inspire. It contains twenty chapters, each focused on a specific topic or issue, by researchers at the forefront of current research who come from a range of disciplines (including linguistics, philosophy, literary studies and developmental psychology).

In recent years, there have been some major developments and new directions within the framework. A key methodological development was the experimental turn in the early 2000s, which is now central to the discipline, with theoretical claims being routinely subjected to empirical testing and the gathering of experimental data on utterance processing guided by theoretical hypotheses. Relevance theorists were pioneers in this regard, more or less inventing the field of 'experimental pragmatics' (for overviews by leaders in this field, see Noveck & Sperber 2004; Breheny 2011). Significant new areas of content, investigated both theoretically and empirically, include the human capacity for epistemic vigilance and its interaction with information conveyed communicatively (e.g. Sperber et al. 2010; Mazzarella 2013, 2015; Reboul 2017), lexical pragmatics and the nature of word meaning (e.g. Wilson & Carston 2007; Carston 2012, 2013; Kolaiti & Wilson 2014), the relation between pragmatics and theory of mind (e.g. Sperber & Wilson 2002; Breheny 2006), the relation between pragmatics and the evolution of language (Reboul 2015; Scott-Phillips 2015), the pragmatics of non-verbal communication (e.g. Wharton

2003a, 2009), pragmatics and the stylistic analysis of texts (e.g. Caink & Clark 2012; Chapman & Clark 2014, in press), the pragmatics of aspects of online social networking (e.g. Scott 2015, 2018), children's developing pragmatic abilities (e.g. Papafragou & Tantalou 2004; Pouscoulous 2013; Zufferey 2015). Many of these new developments are represented in this volume.

We have divided the twenty chapters into three thematic parts. In the first part, 'Relevance Theory and Cognitive Communicative Issues', the chapters focus on questions that arise within the core domain of the theory, namely, 'ostensive-inferential' communication and comprehension, and its cognitive underpinnings. The second part, 'Pragmatics and Linguistic Issues', addresses the implications of relevance-theoretic pragmatics for various components of the stable (encoded or conventional) meaning of specific linguistic elements (words, particles and structures). In the third part, 'Figurative Language and Layered Interpretations', the chapters include discussion of aspects of non-literal communication, of various ways in which communication can involve 'layers' of meaning and of the expression of non-propositional effects, including emotional ones. It would, of course, be possible to structure the chapters in a number of other ways, as the themes and topics often interface and even overlap. For instance, several of the chapters address issues in children's pragmatic development as part of their investigation of a specific phenomenon. The organisation we eventually settled on highlights the ongoing contribution of ideas from relevance theory to theoretical issues in the study of communication, to work on the interface of pragmatics with linguistic meaning, and to broader questions about communication and interpretation of different kinds and levels (social, personal, practical and emotional).

The first part, on cognitive communicative issues, starts with a chapter by Nicholas Allott, which considers how relevance theory can be seen as responding to doubts about the possibility of any kind of systematic pragmatic theory. He considers three sceptical positions: Fodor's argument that pragmatic processes are not amenable to scientific study because they are unencapsulated (highly context sensitive), Chomsky's claim that human intentional action is a mystery rather than a scientifically tractable problem, and a third view which maintains that intentional communication is too complex for systematic study. Allott argues that work in relevance theory can be seen as successfully challenging these sceptical views and he gives concrete examples of its achievements.

Richard Breheny's chapter begins by pointing out one particular success of relevance theory: its account of anticipatory processes in language comprehension and of the effects of stress placement on these processes. Breheny aims to build on this by investigating pragmatic processes which anticipate the source of relevance (the intended context) rather than components of linguistic form or content. He reviews recent empirical work on the processing of questions and negation, and draws out its implications for the issue of how the source

of relevance is represented in utterance processing. He finds in favour of the relevance-theoretic account and against the currently popular view in formal pragmatics that representations of context take the form of 'questions under discussion'.

In their chapter, Axel Barceló Aspeitia and Robert Stainton focus on the interpretation of a group of expressions which they term 'quasi-factives', an area in which the recurring issue of the relative contributions of linguistically encoded meaning and pragmatic inference is especially striking. In line with Deirdre Wilson's early work on presupposition (Wilson 1975), they argue that the factive conclusions which these expressions seem to support are not to be explained semantically. Rather, they are components of the speaker's meaning and their derivation by the addressee depends on the kind of cost–benefit trade-off that is central to relevance theory.

The topic of Victoria Escandell-Vidal's chapter is 'explicature', a notion which has been central to relevance theory from its inception and which introduced a radically new way of thinking about explicitly communicated meaning and about the semantics–pragmatics distinction. Escandell-Vidal focuses here on how utterances of particular expressions in Spanish (some occurrences of the verb *estar* and some uses of 3rd-person imperfective forms) lead to 'higher-level' explicatures expressing a speaker's evidential commitment. She argues that the evidential meaning does not arise from the semantic composition of linguistically encoded content but rather emerges as the optimal solution to a 'feature mismatch' between two components of encoded meaning.

In his chapter, Jacques Moeschler addresses some complex issues about negation, metarepresentation and their interaction. He identifies three distinct uses of negation, namely, descriptive negation and two kinds of metarepresentational negation (one metalinguistic, the other presupposition-cancelling), which differ in their semantic entailments. His key claim is that all three of them have what he calls 'representational' (or propositional) effects on the context, specifically the elimination and/or the strengthening of existing assumptions, albeit different for each of the uses.

Anne Reboul's chapter makes a significant contribution to relevance-theoretic discussions of the phenomenon of 'free indirect discourse', by developing a pragmatic account of the appropriate use and interpretation of pronouns in this special kind of discourse (which typically occurs in literary texts). She first reviews current semantic accounts of pronouns in this kind of discourse and finds that they have problems with certain non-transparent referential uses of pronouns and their presuppositions. Her alternative account, which employs the relevance-theoretic notion of pragmatic enrichment together with the account of singular concepts developed within François Recanati's mental files framework, avoids the problems of the semantic accounts.

In the final chapter of this first part of the book, Myrto Grigoroglou and Anna Papafragou explore what seems to be a paradox about the development of pragmatic abilities: while very young children are able to perform tasks which demonstrate what is required for pragmatic reasoning, certain areas of their pragmatic performance do not become adult-like until much later. Focusing on the much-discussed topic of scalar implicature, they propose that performance in tasks designed to elicit the derivation of such an implicature is significantly affected by the nature of the contextual material provided. When, for example, children appear not to understand an utterance of the form *'some X are Y'* as suggesting *'not all X are Y'*, it may be because they have not seen the potential relevance in the particular context of the thought that *all X are Y*.

The theme of the second part of the book is 'relevance-theoretic pragmatics and linguistic issues' and the chapters in this part demonstrate how giving the human pragmatic capacity primacy of place in the interpretation of linguistic utterances encourages a new perspective on aspects of linguistically encoded meaning and even on the nature of syntax. In the first chapter in this part, Mark Jary and Mikhail Kissine examine the meaning of imperative sentences, taking the existing relevance-theoretic semantic analysis, in terms of the desirability and potentiality of the described state of affairs, as their point of departure. In their view, a complete account of the interpretation of imperatives has to explain how they can result in the addressee forming an intention to perform an action and this requires the theory to make room for 'action representations' (in addition to factual representations, such as assumptions). They claim that the imperative form is uniquely specified to interface with such action representations.

A very different kind of linguistic form is investigated in the next chapter, which is by Eun-Ju Noh: the Korean sentence-final suffix *ci*. The analysis here builds on a body of work in relevance theory on discourse markers or particles, which are typically non-compositional elements of form that do not affect propositional content, but rather indicate something about the speaker's attitude towards or evidence for that proposition. With regard to *ci*, Noh argues that existing treatments of it as an epistemic or attitudinal marker are unable to account for the full range of cases, and that it is better analysed as a metarepresentational marker indicating that the propositional form represents not a state of affairs in the world but rather the speaker's own representation of that state of affairs.

The focus of Diane Blakemore's chapter is two kinds of linguistic phrase which seem to be inherently expressive, nominal epithets such as *The idiot* and small clauses such as *You angel*. She argues against accounts that treat these structures as linguistically encoding the property of expressiveness and in favour of a relevance-theoretic account according to which they communicate a particular conceptual content that guides the addressee in identifying the

attitude the speaker holds towards the target individual. Expressiveness arises when the main relevance of the utterance comes from this information about speaker attitude.

The next two chapters contribute to an area of considerable current interest in semantics and pragmatics, that is, the nature of polysemy (the representation and processing of words with multiple related senses). In her chapter, Robyn Carston discusses the relevance-based on-line construction of ad hoc concepts (or occasion-specific senses) as the source of much semantic polysemy (where words are stored with a cluster of related senses). In an attempt to give a full account of polysemy, one that marries the pragmatics of word meaning with the demands of grammar, she advocates a split view of the lexicon, with one part narrowly linguistic and computational, and the other an ever-evolving store of communicational units.

Thorstein Fretheim discusses a particular Norwegian modal adverb, *gjerne*, which he maintains is polysemous, in that it has two related meanings, both of which are conventionalised and stored in the lexicon. This case of polysemy seems to be different from the polysemy of open-class words (nouns, verbs, adjectives), which is typically explained in relevance-theoretic terms as involving pragmatic adjustments of an encoded concept. He argues that the two meanings of *gjerne* are better analysed as encoded procedures, so as constraining the hearer's interpretation process rather than contributing a concept to that interpretation.

In her chapter, Anne Bezuidenhout shows how the meaning of noun-noun compounds cannot be predicted by linguistic rules but must allow for a component of context-specific relevance-based inference. She reviews several approaches which attempt to provide semantic and/or statistical (bigram frequency-based) accounts of the meaning of compounds but finds none of these fully adequate. She concludes that such accounts inevitably have to be supplemented by local pragmatic processes of concept narrowing and broadening (ad hoc concept construction), such as those developed within the relevance-theoretic framework.

This linguistically oriented part of the book ends with what is perhaps the most radical account of the relation between pragmatics and the linguistic system. In this chapter, Eleni Gregoromichelaki and Ruth Kempson present a range of arguments and data, including cases of split utterances, in support of their position that even syntax should be construed in terms of the linguistic underspecification of utterance content and incremental context-relative processing. This approach to language (which they call 'Dynamic Syntax') is fundamentally different from orthodox generative grammar and conceptualises syntax as procedures for interaction.

The third and final part of the volume focuses on more creative uses of language and their interpretation. The chapters in this part include several that

discuss new questions arising for long-standing topics within pragmatics, specifically, metaphor, metonymy and irony, and some that address new emerging concerns in the field, including the communication of emotions and the communicative nature of adaptations from one medium into another.

The part begins with a chapter by Ingrid Lossius Falkum in which she uses data from young children's communicative development to argue that metaphor and metonymy rely on different pragmatic mechanisms. Metaphor and metonymy have certain characteristics in common: they both target individual words or phrases, they both contribute content to the proposition expressed, and they both lie on a continuum of literal and figurative uses. However, developmental data suggests that early metonymic uses may be the result of a more basic process than metaphorical uses, one in which the child exploits salient associative relations to compensate for gaps in vocabulary.

The chapter by Elly Ifantidou also discusses aspects of the interpretation of metaphor. However, her focus is specifically on issues arising for the understanding of metaphors in a second language learning context. She presents an empirical study in which native Greek-speaking learners of English were presented with a selection of metaphors from British newspapers. The results of this comprehension task suggest that even when second language learners are confronted with a metaphor whose intended propositional content they cannot fully grasp, the literal content of the metaphor may still trigger images, sensorimotor processes and emotional attitudes which provide them with a partial interpretation.

The next two chapters focus on some other kinds of non-literal language use, specifically irony and allegory. Tomoko Matsui takes a developmental perspective on ironical language use and considers the role of epistemic vigilance and mind-reading mechanisms in children's understanding of irony. She discusses evidence that indicates that children as old as 9 years may misinterpret instances of irony as deliberate lies and suggests that this is a result of their developing epistemic vigilance mechanisms (specifically, a sensitivity to the truth or falsity of information) together with a not yet fully mature appreciation of how information can achieve relevance.

In his chapter on allegory, Christoph Unger first outlines the pragmatic mechanisms employed in the processing of metaphor and irony, and then compares them with those that seem to be required for the understanding of allegories. Building on ideas of Sperber and Wilson (1987b), he argues that allegories are like fictions more generally in that they require the capacity to process multi-layered intentions. As such, processing allegory differs radically from metaphor comprehension (which involves ad hoc concept construction) but uses some of the same abilities as irony comprehension, specifically the ability to process utterances on two levels in parallel and the capacity to process interpretive resemblances between representations.

The somewhat neglected topic of emotion in communication is the focus of the chapter by Tim Wharton and Claudia Strey, who argue that it is time to develop an account of how emotions are expressed and communicated and to fully integrate it into pragmatic theory. They discuss the descriptive ineffability of emotional communication and argue for the introduction of a new notion of 'positive emotional effect' to complement the existing notion of 'positive cognitive effect'. They also suggest that recent developments in relevance theory, specifically work on indeterminacy of meaning and on procedural meaning, make it uniquely capable of accommodating these vaguer aspects of communication.

In the final chapter of the volume, Anne Furlong demonstrates a new application of relevance theory through a discussion of how relevance is achieved when adapting a 'literary' work from one communicative medium into another (e.g. from written text into film). She argues that adaptations should be understood as communicative acts in their own right, so as falling under the presumption of optimal relevance like any other ostensive acts, and suggests that assumptions about the source texts can form part of the context in which that new communicative act is interpreted.

To conclude this summary of the contents of the volume, it just remains to emphasise that while these twenty chapters cover a multitude of different topics (linguistic, pragmatic, cognitive and aesthetic), they are bound together by their application of the principles and concepts of relevance theory. Collectively, they are testimony to the insights of that framework and its ongoing capacity to engage with and provide illuminating answers to a wide range of questions about human communication.

The primary motivation for us to call on the community of scholars working within relevance theory to contribute to this book was our wish to pay (long overdue) tribute to Deirdre Wilson. To this end, we also invited two of Deirdre's closest and longest-standing colleagues and friends, Dan Sperber and Neil Smith, to write short reflective prefaces to the volume. Dan reflects on the origins of Deirdre's and his work on relevance theory, its development over the decades and its future directions, while Neil reflects on the very significant impact of Deirdre's work and charismatic teaching in shaping the profile and reputation of the Linguistics department at University College London (UCL).

Although she officially retired from UCL in 2008, Deirdre has continued to work intensively within the field of pragmatics, both in the ongoing collaboration with Dan (as detailed in his reflective notes), and in developing other collaborative projects, two of which are especially noteworthy. In the first of these, she was a founding member of the Centre for the Study of Mind in Nature (CSMN), a ten-year centre of excellence (2007–2017) based at the University of Oslo, where she worked on the 'Linguistic Agency' project, focusing on the topic of metarepresentation (both mental and linguistic) and its role in

communication. The second major collaboration was on the Balzan Project *Literature as an Object of Knowledge* (2010–2014), led by Terence Cave, at the University of Oxford, on which she was officially a senior consultant, but in the end much more than that. Deirdre collaborated with philosophers and linguists (at the CSMN) and with literary specialists (on the Balzan project).

At the CSMN, Deirdre considerably developed her body of work on the pragmatics of non-literal language use. This included new ideas about how the cognitive linguistics approach to metaphor might interact with the relevance-theoretic approach (Wilson 2011a), extensive work on the nature of irony, how children acquire the ability to produce and understand it (Wilson 2013) and how it differs from other (often co-occurring) figurative uses, such as hyperbole, jokes and banter (Wilson 2017), and a new take on the phenomenon of metonymy, which had not been much discussed before within relevance theory (Wilson & Falkum forthcoming). Another strand of work conducted at this time concerned the conceptual/procedural distinction, which was initiated within relevance theory in the 1980s by Diane Blakemore, with a particular focus on the meaning of discourse connectives such as *but*, *after all*, and *well* (e.g. Blakemore 1987, 2002). Deirdre has developed this distinction considerably, suggesting that many more linguistic expressions have a component of procedural meaning, which activates a cognitive inferential process rather than mapping to a conceptual representation. In her most recent papers on this topic, she has developed the intriguing idea that certain linguistic expressions might activate particular domain-specific procedures belonging to modules (or sub-modules) which play a significant role in linguistic communication, including those involved in mind-reading, emotion reading, social cognition, parsing, and epistemic vigilance (Wilson 2011b, 2016). In parallel with her work on these innovative areas of theoretical research, Deirdre has collaborated with colleagues who specialise in assessing the pragmatic capacities of clinical populations, in particular those with autism spectrum disorders (e.g. Chevallier et al. 2010, 2011).

The investigation with Terence Cave and other literary specialists on the Balzan project was a largely new direction, both for relevance theory and for literary studies, and Deirdre played a key role in driving forward the project's aim of developing a cognitively informed and cognitively inflected literary criticism: 'it [literature] invites a cognitive mode of criticism, one which asserts the priority of the individual literary work as a unique product of human cognition' (Cave 2016). This culminated in their co-edited book *Reading Beyond the Code: Literature and Relevance Theory*, in which literary theorists explore the applicability to literary texts of concepts, principles and distinctions from relevance theory, including the showing/telling distinction, the comprehension/interpretation continuum, 'weak implicature', 'ad hoc concepts', and 'echoic use', among others.

Deirdre's own chapter in that volume is called 'Relevance theory and literary interpretation', and in it she assesses the extent to which a pragmatic theory like relevance theory can shed light on the interpretation of literary utterances. She acknowledges that there are significant respects in which communication via a literary text differs from the kind of face-to-face communication that has been the main focus of pragmatic theory, while insisting that it must, nevertheless, draw on the same basic cognitive and communicative abilities employed in all ostensive communication and inferential interpretation. As she notes, a particular interest for literary scholars is the treatment of 'non-propositional' phenomena, including imagery, emotions and sensorimotor processes, which seem to play a heightened role in many literary works. Drawing on the many discussions of these phenomena that took place with colleagues on the Balzan project, she develops the idea that a new broader notion of pragmatic inference (see Sperber & Wilson 2015) may play a key role in providing a more unitary account of the full range of non-propositional effects.

A second important insight that Deirdre explores in the chapter concerns a distinction between the internal and external relevance of a literary text. The 'internal' relevance of a literary work concerns the way in which aspects of the fictional world created by the author guide and constrain the ongoing interpretation of the text, giving rise to cognitive implications and other effects that are contained within the fictional frame. The 'external' relevance of a text, on the other hand, concerns the cognitive effects it may have on beliefs and assumptions about the actual world that the reader has independently of the text. Developing an early idea in Sperber and Wilson (1987b: 751), Deirdre suggests that this duality of expectations of relevance and of cognitive effects achieved might be explained in terms of an author simultaneously performing ostensive acts on two levels: 'a lower-level act of describing a fictional world, and a higher-level act of *showing this world* to the reader as an example of what is possible, or conceivable' (Wilson 2018). The expectations of relevance raised by the lower-level act would be 'internal', while the higher-level act would create 'external' expectations of relevance. As with her very detailed work on irony, metaphor and metonymy, Deirdre's work on literary interpretation opens up new lines of thought for future investigation within the relevance theory framework.

We hope this collection of chapters by Deirdre's colleagues and former students[1] gives some indication of the powerful shaping effect of her ideas

[1] Deirdre Wilson has worked collaboratively with a great many colleagues, supervised scores of doctoral and postdoctoral students, and been a committed mentor to many other students and scholars across the world. Naturally, but regrettably, it was impossible for us to include all those who we know would have made valuable contributions to this volume.

and of her brilliance and clarity in communicating them. We offer it to her as a small token of our gratitude, respect and affection.

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