

Preface

The title of the series *Relevance Studies in Poland* is meant to reflect two ideas at the same time: firstly, that a number of Polish scholars working in the domain of cognitive pragmatics and translation studies adopt Relevance Theory as their research perspective and have sought to make contributions to the framework, and secondly, that Poland has become a centre for relevance-theoretic studies, in part thanks to two cyclical conferences dedicated solely to RT – the Interpreting for Relevance conference and the Relevance Round Table (both organized by the University of Warsaw). It is also worth mentioning that the Polish-language version of Sperber and Wilson's *Relevance: Communication and Cognition* was published in 2011, a fact that will hopefully contribute to the further popularization of the theory among Polish scholars, including those working outside the domain of English studies.

The eleven papers included in this volume have resulted from meetings and discussions held in Poland. They deal with topics ranging from strictly language-related phenomena, such as lexical pragmatics, information structure, ambiguity and multiplicity of meanings, to broader considerations of various aspects of ostensive-inferential communication, including papers on weak communication, the effects of communication on the formation of social bonds, the relationship between affective states and cognition, gaps in blind people's knowledge and the evolutionary origins of communication.

The recent development of the field of lexical pragmatics (Carston 2002, Wilson 2004) has yielded some refinements in understanding the relevance-theoretic notions of logical, encyclopaedic, and lexical entries for concepts. In **The lexical entry in lexical pragmatics – a relevance-theoretic view** Ewa Wałaszewska probes into the nature of lexical entries, examining their role in various processes of on-line meaning adjustment. Then the author discusses polysemous and homonymous items, arguing that in the case of the former, the

related senses have one mental representation, whereas instances of the latter have distinct mental representations. The paper also examines the phenomenon whereby part of the encyclopaedic content of one concept may be carried over to another concept with the same lexical entry, which happens if one of the words denotes a taboo-concept.

Daniel Sax's paper **Not quite 'out of the blue'? Towards a dynamic, relevance-theoretic approach to thetic sentences in English** deals with sentences of the type *My CAR broke down* or *JOHN arrived*, which have drawn attention in the information-structure literature due a number of special characteristics, including their ability to support an all-new reading despite sentence stress falling on the subject (leaving the predicate unstressed) and the requirement that a close semantic relationship must hold between their subject and predicate. Building on Sperber and Wilson (1986/95), Breheny (1998), and his own previous work (2010), Sax offers a thorough analysis of various types of thetic sentences in English, claiming that their distinctive traits may be explained in terms of the relevance-theoretic comprehension procedure and the effect of early sentence stress on dynamic, constituent-by-constituent processing. In this model the role of sentence stress is to invite the hearer to derive the main cognitive effects of the utterance at the stage where it is applied, and Sax concludes that early stress marking in thetic sentences can be seen as governed by independently-motivated pragmatic principles (giving rise to a kind of 'weak predictability') rather than by arbitrary linguistic convention, as posited in some of the information-structure literature.

Agnieszka Solska's paper **On the notion of 'pragmatic ambiguity': assessing multiple meanings in free indirect discourse** examines the problem of the alleged ambiguity inherent in free indirect speech, exploited by writers to create the effect of uncertainty as to whom an opinion or assumption may be ascribed. The paper initially poses the question of whether such instances of free indirect speech should be classified together with other types of utterances which purposely exploit linguistic ambiguities, such as puns and zeugmas, then it provides arguments against such an analysis.

The paper **The implicit revisited** by Maria Jodłowiec elaborates on the distinction between the implicatures and implications of an utterance. The former are manifestly intended by the speaker whereas the latter can be merely activated in the hearer's mind, for instance as part of encyclopaedic information attached to concepts present in the explicature. In this way it becomes evident how the actual linguistic formulation used by the speaker to communicate her thought may bear upon the interpretation process – either by directing the hearer's processing path in the way envisaged by the speaker, or by incidentally activating assumptions associated with concepts. As there is no clear-cut distinction between weakly communicated implicatures and non-communicated implications of an utterance, it has typically been assumed that weak communication involves a set

of implicatures which are indeterminate, in the sense that it is not clear which of them are specifically intended by the speaker. Following Sperber and Wilson's (2006) claim that implicatures and implications differ in strength independently (i.e. strong implications of an utterance may be weak implicatures in a communication situation and the other way around), Jodłowiec postulates to revisit the definition of weak communication in RT as involving the speaker's intention to simultaneously activate various processing paths and therefore deliberately invite the derivation of numerous weak implicatures.

Manuel Padilla Cruz's article titled **Metarepresentation, attitudinal utterances and attitude combination: a relevance-theoretic approach** deals with utterances which bring about rapport, solidarity or affinity between interlocutors. Such utterances, termed *attitudinal*, include compliments and complaints and are believed to achieve relevance, and hence the social effects desired, by the attribution of beliefs and implications that can be derived from those beliefs and also by the attribution of attitudes, feelings and emotions. The processing of attitudinal utterances is thus shown to rely on the hearer's metarepresentational abilities (Wilson 1999). Additionally, the paper discusses the apparently totally non-informative occurrences of repeated attitudinal utterances, arguing that their relevance resides in creating a combination of attitudes and leads to social effects mentioned above.

In the paper **The relevance of valence in pragmatic inferencing**, Katarzyna Bromberek-Dyzman addresses the issue of the valence of ostensively communicated utterances as a parameter exerting an impact on their processing. Valence is a fundamental property of all affective states experienced by living creatures and numerous studies have indicated that the affective load of stimuli is received by an organism prior to their being processed by the cognitive system (e.g. Zajonc 1980; Murphy and Zajonc 1993; LeDoux 1996). Bromberek-Dyzman therefore sees the Principle of Relevance (Sperber and Wilson 1986/95) as a cognitive strategy operating at the most general level of processing and valence as a trigger of more specific 'fast and frugal' heuristics contributing to the interpretation of evaluatively loaded stimuli.

Agnieszka Piskorska's paper **Cognition and emotions – jointly contributing to positive cognitive effects?** attempts to capture the role of emotions in utterance comprehension in two ways: as factors increasing or decreasing the accessibility of certain contextual assumptions which may be used as implicated premises, or as effects of comprehension itself. Prompted by some views advocated by cognitive psychology theorists (e.g. Lazarus 1984, Oatley et al. 2006) on the inseparability of cognitive and emotional responses, the paper puts forward the suggestion that treating emotions evoked by processing an utterance as a kind of 'positive cognitive effect' in their own right, rather than merely a follow-up to positive cognitive effects *per se*, would better correspond with what emotions are.

The subject of emotions is also discussed by Elwira Szehidewicz in her article **A relevance-theoretic analysis of emotions in a cognitive-behavioural psychotherapy session**. The author adopts the empirical perspective of a therapist involved in work with her patients and applies the relevance-theoretic apparatus to the description of therapist-patient communication. Two fragments of such conversations are analyzed in order to show the significance of the two interlocutors' mutual cognitive environments, especially its portion comprising the knowledge of emotions. Good communication resulting in increasing the mutual cognitive environment is indispensable in therapy, although it is not a single factor which could guarantee its success.

Jolanta Sak-Wernicka examines the problems of the idiosyncratic conceptual representations that may be present in blind individuals (in **Gaps in blind learners' knowledge – can Relevance Theory account for them?**). By discussing numerous examples of non-standard conceptual representations attested in interaction with the blind, Sak-Wernicka attempts to establish the sources of such gaps in knowledge. Apart from the effects of blindness on concept formation, the author is also interested in its impact on ostensive inferential communication.

Paweł Konopczak's article called **A relevance-assisted approach to the origins of human communication** looks at the implications that Relevance Theory carries for two theories of the origins of human communication, namely Bickerton's (1985, 1990) and Tomasello's (2010) accounts. The paper demonstrates how the two theories could benefit from adopting certain relevance-theoretic assumptions, for example the assumption that communication is not necessarily a co-operative undertaking.

In closing, as a kind of 'bonus track', we include a paper by Maria Jodłowiec and Agnieszka Piskorska on translating the book *Relevance: Communication and Cognition* into Polish. Maria Jodłowiec is a co-translator and both authors are co-editors of the Polish language version of *Relevance* and in this paper they share their observations on some of the numerous challenges that cropped up in the translation of Sperber and Wilson's influential work – some of them more unexpected than others. This case-study serves as an interesting opportunity to discuss some of the dilemmas invariably encountered by translators (as applied to the somewhat distinctive task of translating a seminal theoretical framework for consumption by a broad intended audience), such as choosing between terminological consistency and clarity, between domesticating and foreignizing strategies, and between faithfulness to the original and naturalness in the target language.

All in all, the sample of papers in the volume may be said to reflect well the range of contemporary work in Relevance Theory: some papers address important issues at the heart of the theory itself (such as the core mechanisms of communication and cognition, their relationships to emotions and linguistic

form) whereas others represent attempts to push the existing boundaries of the theory, taking its insights into more uncharted territory (such as human evolution, psychotherapy, the study of the blind, and even the Polish language).

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