Applications of Relevance Theory

Applications of Relevance Theory:

From Discourse to Morphemes

Edited by

Agnieszka Piskorska
and Ewa Wałaszewska

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Introduction

Applications of Relevance Theory: From Discourse to Morphemes

Ewa Wałaszewska and Agnieszka Piskorska,
University of Warsaw, Poland

When Paul Grice put forward his theory of implicature in his 1967 William James Lectures, one of the crucial distinctions underlying his model was that between 'saying' and 'implicating'. The 'saying' side of the dichotomy seemed to be relatively well understood and it was the implicit side of communication that needed explaining. The explanation offered included a set of rules governing the recovery of implicatures, i.e. the Co-operative Principle (CP) and its attendant maxims, as well as inference as the mechanism taking the hearer from 'what is said' to 'what is implicated'. The expectations laid on the role of inference in interpreting 'what is said' were rather modest and included a few specific tasks, such as assigning reference to referring expressions, deciding on a sense of an ambiguous expression, and fixing some variables associated with the deictic parameters of an utterance. The role of the CP and the maxims in interpreting 'what is said' was not addressed, which can be taken as an indication that, indeed, the CP and maxims were seen as functional only in interpreting implicatures, or, at best, also in the 'said' layer of communication to the small extent to which inference played a role in it (cf. Grice 1989, 45 on the meaning of the verb *say* in the relevant sense).

As the history of science, linguistics included, shows, pioneering ideas have to be not only developed, but also modified, often substantially. Relevance Theory (RT) adopted Grice's general views that communication involves inference and that communicated meaning can be explained in terms of speaker's intentions, but vastly redefined the role of inference and the status of principles governing inferential processes. This was necessitated by the change of perspective: although Relevance Theory continues the

philosophical-linguistic tradition inspired by Grice, it is committed to the scientific rigour of a cognitive science at the same time. The latter means that information processing by the human mind in real time has to be treated as a crucial factor in constructing the theory. Therefore, it has to be taken into account that inference is spontaneously and instantenously performed on linguistic material, that the principle governing inferential processes has to be cognitive (rather than based on philosophy or rules of social conduct), and that the evolutionary advantage of the communication mode actually employed by humans over alternative models has to be explained too.

Such requirements are met by the Communicative Principle of Relevance, which supports the relevance-based model of human communication on the strength of efficiency of information processing in real time. The principle states that every act of communication conveys the presumption of its own optimal relevance (Sperber and Wilson [1986] 1995, 158; Sperber and Wilson 1995, 260-261), which means that every utterance is interpreted in such a way as to maximize cognitive benefits and minimize processing effort. Thus, of many interpretations possible, the hearer will automatically and spontaneously choose the one that meets the two conditions: (1) it brings about large cognitive gains, which can be generally characterized as improvements in the representation of the world and (2) it requires such amount of effort that can be justified by these gains.

When applied to the study of discourse, the cognitive perspective inherent in RT means that the object of study is not discourse *per se*, but the understanding of discourse by human beings, as Diane Blakemore (2001, 100-101) put it. Rather than define abstract relations, such as discourse coherence, RT thus focuses on how we see various elements of a text as coherent when we process them in search for optimal relevance. It goes without saying that constructing discourse relations is facilitated by what has been called in the literature 'discourse markers', such as *but* or *so*, which constrain the hearer's search for relevance. Making no contribution to the truth-conditional or representational meaning of utterances, discourse markers are treated as encoding 'procedural meaning', i.e. instructions how to manipulate conceptual representations in order to optimize relevance. It needs to be mentioned that since the notion of procedural meaning was first introduced as an account of discourse markers by Blakemore (1987), it has undergone a notable development. For example, Wilson and Sperber (1993) put forward the claim that some procedural items, such as pronouns, contribute to truth-conditions. With the emergence of the idea that evaluating propositions communicated as

believable or not is served by a distinct mental module, the so-called 'argumentation module' (e.g. Mercier and Sperber 2009), the role of discourse markers has been re-analyzed with respect to whether they fall within the operation of the comprehension module or the argumentation module.

The issue of procedural meaning is raised in **Part I** of the present volume, called **Discourse and Procedural Meaning**, which includes three contributions. Two of them focus on specific linguistic items and one puts forward a more general proposal about reformulating the traditional theme/rheme distinction in terms of procedural meaning.

The opening chapter **"Cognitive Environment and Information Structure"** by Jadwiga Linde-Usiekniewicz explores the applicability of one of the fundamental concepts of Relevance Theory, that of 'cognitive environment', to developing a re-definition of the basic categories used in describing the information structure of sentences and/or utterances, namely the theme/rheme distinction. Linde-Usiekniewicz draws upon her previous work devising an Encoding Grammar (Linde-Usiekniewicz 2012), in which the claim is put forward that different components of the language system, such as syntax, semantics, and discourse organization could be at odds with one another, as well as with the speaker's communicative needs. The formulation eventually chosen by the speaker could be thus seen as an instance of conflict resolution or a compromise. Citing arguments in favour of maintaining information structure as a crucial part of linguistic analysis, and in favour of the level of 'utterance-type', the paper argues that the theme-rheme articulation can be constructively viewed in terms of procedural meaning, on the level of 'utterance-types'

Signe Rix Berthelin's contribution "**Towards a Relevance-Theoretic Account of the Iñupiaq Hearsay Evidential *Guuq***" dissects a single expression in an endangered language of Alaska on the basis of data collected during interviews with native speakers. The analyzed enclitic seems to mark utterances in which it occurs as providing hearsay information. By arguing that *guuq* may be successfully described within a relevance-theoretic approach to modality, Berthelin throws some light on the notions of evidentiality and modality. First, the author reveals certain inconsistencies in previous descriptions and classifications of *guup* and similar expressions in Alaskan languages in terms of evidentiality. *Guuq* is nevertheless classified as an optional evidential expression indicating that the speaker is not the source of evidence presented in the utterance. This indication does not necessarily make the evidence less reliable. Notably, in the context of storytelling *guuq* may increase the speaker's responsibility

for the truth of the presented information. To account for these findings, the author employs a relevance-theoretic framework developed previously by Papafragou (2000) to analyze the meaning of modal verbs. Interestingly, she also provides sound arguments for rejecting an analysis in terms of attributive or echoic use.

In his paper, succinctly entitled "*Instead*", Thornstein Fretheim provides a detailed analysis of the meaning and uses of the English expression. Noticing that *instead* in its two syntactic patterns encodes a contrary relation between a factual and a non-factual entity, the author focuses on the construction with a zero complement, or the "bare *instead*". This is because the "zero anaphor" necessarily involves a lot of inference, which makes this pattern more interesting to pragmatics. Taking into consideration semantic, etymological and cross-linguistic data, on the basis of actual examples from translation corpora, Fretheim describes three distinct ways in which the procedural meaning of the analysed expression may contribute to relevance. This contribution may involve activation or provision of a contextual assumption, a bridging implicature or conceptual content. The analysis sheds an interesting light on the nature of procedural meaning and its interaction with conceptual, truth-conditional and implicit meaning.

Although understanding all types of discourse involves the same process of searching for relevance, not all of them are equally amenable to interpretation, since access to contextual knowledge varies among individuals. The four chapters included in **Part II**, **Specialized Discourses and Relevance Theory,** address problems of communication taking place in circumstances removed from the prototypical situations of face-to-face interactions in which interlocutors share the same perceptible cognitive environment. One such case is discussed by Francisco Yus in **"Putting Relevance at Centre Stage in Research on Human Activity on the Internet.**" Yus shows that Relevance Theory can be fruitfully applied to 'cyberpragmatics' and account for all kinds of human activities undertaken on the Internet, including interactions between users and computer systems. Over the last few years, the development of Internet use has increased so radically that it has become not only a powerful tool in the hands of human beings but also an equally powerful factor affecting what human beings are. Thus, cyberpragmatics has become a valid and fascinating area of research on communication (see Yus 2011). As Yus shows, RT can be applied to this field partly on the strength of the Communicative Principle of Relevance, which governs all the communicative exchanges between users, and partly on the strength of the Cognitive Principle of Relevance, which governs processing of all stimuli

accessible to the human mind. In this way, four areas of relevance-driven processing are covered by Yus's analysis: (a) relevance sought by the system for the user, discussing not only benefits but also limitations of applying relevance-based predictions of human needs by systems like search engines; (b) relevance sought by the user in the system, offering an explanation why and how the Internet exerts a strong and possibly harmful effect on human minds (cf. Carr 2008, 2010); (c) relevance sought by the user in another user's coded input (e.g. an utterance), analysing how conditions specific to the Internet communication affect the effort-effect balance; and (d) relevance sought by the user in a group of users, observing that the possibility of staying in touch with several other users simultaneously offsets the considerable mental effort of split attention by benefits of social nature, such as shaping one's identity, or sense of belonging to a group. Generally, as Yus observes, non-cognitive rewards are obtained in a number of Internet activities.

Some groups of communicators may lack access to contextual resources available to others due to perceptual limitations. Such a case is discussed in Jolanta Sak-Wernicka's paper **"The Guru Effect in Blind People's Comprehension,"** putting forward the idea that sighted individuals play the role of guru (in the sense of Sperber 2010) in front of the blind, who are aware of the cognitive advantage afforded by the sense of sight but who are often unaware of the exact character and magnitude of this advantage. Sak-Wernicka takes as a departure point Sperber's (2010) observation that when a speaker produces an obscure utterance, this does not necessarily lead to the hearer's negative assessment of the speaker's rhetorical abilities, but on the contrary, it may give rise to the 'guru effect': the hearer will ascribe to the speaker a level of knowledge and sophistication exceeding his own interpretive abilities. Sak-Wernicka goes on to note that blind people will inevitably ascribe the role of the guru to sighted people as those who have unlimited access to visual information. Consequently, the visually impaired will tend to blame their own limitations for not understanding sighted communicators, rather than seek the causes of such a situation in external factors. They also tend to trust sighted informants and take importance of their explanations for granted. Besides, they are naturally eager to invest a great amount of cognitive effort in the process of interpretation. These observations are corroborated by a number of comprehension task experiments, testing both spontaneous understanding and more conscious reasoning strategies applied by the blind.

A different situation in which the roles of participants in communication are not symmetrical is dealt with by Elwira Szehidewicz in the chapter

"Relevance Theory and Cognitive Behavioral Therapy Theory in the Analysis of Psychotherapeutic Discourse," which applies RT to the analysis of a therapist-client interaction. For therapy to be effective, it is crucial that the two parties reach understanding and build a mutual cognitive environment. To reach this aim, the therapist has to engage actively in helping the patient formulate a verbal representation of her thoughts and emotions. Sometimes the only possible formulation involves a figure of speech, and as predicted by RT, the more original it is, the richer and subtler the range of communicated cognitive effects. By analyzing an example of a metaphor used by the therapist and accepted by the patient as a faithful representation of the onset of her panic attack, the author attempts to indicate strong and weak points of the cognitive routes postulated for the understanding of metaphor within RT, i.e. the route leading via the ad hoc concept formation (e.g. Carston 2002; Wilson and Carston 2008) and the route via the working out of weak implicatures (Wilson and Sperber 2002). Szehidewicz concludes that the most fruitful line of metaphor interpretation admits activating images and using them as input to deriving the final effect.

As a case of interlingual and intercultural communication, translation naturally involves a shift from the context of the original text to the one in which the translation will be interpreted. Despite difficulties resulting from this, translators typically do their best to convey the meaning of the original to target text readers. But as Edyta Źrałka shows in the chapter **"The Translator's Intentions – the Same as or Different from the Author's? Cases of Manipulation in Polish Translations of British Press Articles in 1965-1989,"** this may not be so when political propaganda is involved. The problem touched upon in the paper, namely the inevitable interference of the translator's communicative intention with that of the author's, is vital for translation at large. Most translators who decide to tamper with the original author's intentions by introducing additions, omissions, or some alterations to the text decide to do so to facilitate understanding or to conform to the target language and culture norms. Some translators, however, may be guided by ideological considerations, either their own, or imposed upon them by authorities, as was the case with translators creating Polish language versions of British press articles during the communist times in Poland, where the point was to conform to the regime's expectations to produce texts showing the communist system in a more favourable light than that in which it was actually portrayed by the original authors. The paper discusses various perspectives on manipulation in translation, as well as strategies and techniques employed towards making the audience accept the translated

text without realizing that the author's communicative intention has been overridden by the translator's, or more precisely, the commissioner's ideological purposes. Analyzing examples from articles published in the years 1965-1989, Źrałka observes that the most frequent manipulative techniques were extensive omissions and additions, ranging from single words to whole paragraphs.

Part III called **Figures of Speech in Literary Discourse** contains two chapters addressing the issues of figurative language to be found in literary works. Generally, Relevance Theory treats metaphor and related figures of speech in a much deflationary way (Sperber and Wilson 2008), by positing that they do not involve a departure from any norm of literalness and that there is a continuum of cases ranging from literalness through loose uses of language to less and more creative metaphors. The chapter **"Towards a Relevance Theory Account of Allegory"** by Christoph Unger is an attempt to extend the RT analysis of non-literal uses of language to allegory. The phenomenon of allegory raises a number of theoretical issues, especially with regard to how it is related to metaphor. One of the problems stems from the fact that most accounts of allegory explain it in terms of its relationship with metaphor. For example, Crisp (2008) claims that allegory is based on the same processes as metaphor but differs from extended metaphor both quantitatively and qualitatively. The major difference between the two is that whereas metaphor involves both source and target domains, the language used in allegory relates exclusively to the source domain. According to Thagard (2011), allegory is similar to metaphor as it is also based on analogical mappings which are subject to three constraints concerning similarity, structure and purpose. However, to be successful, an allegory must not only satisfy the similarity constraint but also arouse emotions so as to bring about its purpose. Gibbs (2011) regards allegory as involving metaphorical interpretation of non-metaphorical language, with comprehension of both allegory and metaphor being based on the process of embodied cognitive simulation. In order to present a plausible relevance-theoretic account of allegory, Unger chooses to carry out a detailed analysis of the biblical "song of the vineyard" (Isaiah 5) and other data. It turns out that allegory may involve an extended metaphor but, more crucially, it relies on ambiguity between literal and figurative meaning, which is transparent for the audience. The difference between metaphor and allegory is thus substantial and theory-independent.

The cognitive mechanisms behind the production and interpretation of irony have been widely discussed in RT since its origins (e.g. Sperber and Wilson 1981, [1986] 1995, 1998; Wilson 2006; Wilson and Sperber 2012). It is believed that the chief purpose of using irony is to tacitly

communicate a dissociative attitude toward an assumption attributed to some source, be it a specific individual, a group of individuals, or people in general. The assumption alluded to typically refers to a state of affairs which has failed to materialise, so the need to express a negative attitude often results from a feeling of disappointment when events run contrary to expectations. That appears to be the main motivation behind the deployment of irony in Orwell's *Animal Farm*, believed to mirror the Russian Revolution of 1917 and the disillusion that followed it. In the paper **"Code and Inference in the Expression of Irony in Orwell's *Animal Farm* and its Translation into Spanish,"** Maria Angeles Ruiz **Moneva** observes that irony communicated by the narrator of the story is easy to grasp for the reader because he is aware of the discrepancy between the real outcome of the revolution and its original ideology and objectives. The idea put forward by Yus (2000, 2012) is that the realisation of the incompatibility between the literal content of an utterance and the contextual resources bearing on its interpretation is a trigger of an ironic interpretation. It thus follows that the easier the access to such contextual resources, the more accessible the ironic interpretation. In *Animal Farm*, the audience is put on the author-intended processing path by a frequent use of linguistic devices, such as understatement, syntactic parallelism, or the choice of words, which are therefore used as communicative clues (Gutt 2000), signalling the incompatibility of the statement expressed with the way things are in the reality of the plot. Since the use of language, or code, is conducive to the successful recovery of ironical attitude, Ruiz Moneva favourably assesses the strategy of direct translation (Gutt 2000) employed in the Spanish-language version of Animal Farm, preserving the original work's linguistic form and providing the reader of the translated text with an opportunity to follow an inferential path analogous to that of the original audience.

Humorous discourse appears to have its own characteristics: it requires the hearer to invest considerable processing effort, for which the pay-off comes in the form of amusement rather than purely cognitive gains. **Part IV** called **Humorous Discourse** consists of two chapters. In **"Degrees of 'Punniness'? A Relevance-Theoretic Account of Puns and Pun-Like Utterances,"** Agnieszka Solska examines two types of utterances which exploit lexical ambiguity for the sake of a rhetorical effect in a pun-like manner and yet differ from puns proper in that they do not rely on representing the two meanings of a pivotal word simultaneously. One type involves metalingual cases of word play, such as *Not all banks are river banks* and the other type includes "pun-like comparisons", such as *Jane is as hard as nails*. Rejecting the claim that puns and pun-like utterances

represent various manifestations or degrees of the same phenomenon, Solska postulates that distinct conceptual configurations are at play in metalingual word-play utterances and in pun-like comparisons: in the former, the two senses of a word are merged into a hybrid ad hoc concept, whereas in the latter only one of the senses genuinely contributes to the relevance of an utterance.

Magdalena Biegajło's **"'To Classify or not to Classify?' On a Relevance-Theoretic Classification of Jokes: A Critical Survey"** starts with a critical overview of the three most widely known taxonomies of jokes developed within the relevance-theoretic framework, namely those by Jodłowiec (1991a, 1991b, 2008), Curcó (1995, 1996a, 1996b, 1997) and Yus (2003, 2004, 2008, 2012, 2013). The author tries to indicate their various methodological shortcomings by claiming that classes of jokes distinguished in each model are not clearly delineated. Since the criteria for teasing apart joke types are inferential mechanisms responsible for generating humour, Biegajło argues that each class should include jokes exploiting only one such mechanism, and if more such mechanisms can be shown to be at play in jokes included in one class, this can be considered a flaw in the whole system of classification. The second part of the paper presents a quantitative analysis of a group of jokes employing the three typologies, with some modifications. As the author concludes, although it can be plausibly claimed that RT offers an exhaustive account of various inferential processes leading to humorous effects, it does not necessarily entail that they can be straightforwardly used as a basis for joke typology.

With the rise of lexical pragmatics, relevance theorists have not only started but also intensified work on lexical modulation, understood as "different types of pragmatic effect on the meanings that lexical items are used to convey" (Allott 2010, 109). The main two types of such pragmatic effect are the broadening and narrowing of the lexically-encoded meaning of a word, or in other words, non-lexicalized ad hoc concepts which are broader or narrower than the lexicalized concepts from which they have been derived. What is interesting, it seems that the pragmatic processes yielding concept modulation may be related to the morphological process of neology, by means of which new terms are coined or existing words acquire new meanings, functions and uses (see Wilson and Carston 2007, 237). This idea is explored in **Part V**, called **Morphological Issues and Lexical Pragmatics**. The three chapters included there focus on the production and comprehension of neologisms, and explain them in terms of ad hoc concept formation.

Martin Schröder's contribution **"Broadening the Scope of Lexical Pragmatics: The Creation of Neologisms in Toposa"** offers a discussion

on the formation of neologisms by an ethnic group that has undergone major changes in their language and culture over the last twenty-five years, the Toposa of South Sudan. An isolated tribe still in the ninety-eighties, the Toposa subsequently experienced a civil war which brought about the displacement of many ethnic groups and massive migration into Toposa areas, contact with warfare technology, and a flow of Western aid and development. All these factors, together with a Bible translation, language development and literacy projects, spurred a demand for new words to encode newly acquired concepts and set in motion a number of lexical processes leading to the creation of neologisms.

Among the word-formation patterns operating in Toposa, the paper presents data exemplifying a number of derivational processes, including affixation, change of gender and change of noun class. Beside those, there are instances of compounding, meaning extension, the use of descriptive phrases, coining new collocations and loans. The analysis of the Toposa data provides the author with the opportunity to ask important questions about the nature of the meaning of root morphemes and of affixes, as well as their contribution to the meaning of the newly-created term. In relation to that, he proposes that the major component of the root morpheme meaning is conceptual and the minor one is procedural, whereas in the case of affixes, the reverse proportion holds. As to the process of combining the root meaning with an affix meaning, Schröder postulates that it largely resembles the process of utterance production and interpretation in that it is relevance-driven and involves the creation of ad hoc concepts. The analogy between neologisms and utterances is motivated by the fact that both are novel. Whether terms that originated as neologisms enter the lexicon, on the other hand, depends on a number of social and political factors. As one of his concluding remarks, Schröder puts forward the claim that the analysis of word formation processes that are taking place in a language of a society confronted with external changes could be beneficial for translators who often face the need to coin new terms.

Ewa Wałaszewska's paper **"Contrastive Reduplication and Relevance Theory"** provides a relevance-theoretic account of a word formation process, referred to as 'contrastive reduplication', which involves combining two identical words of which the first is contrastively stressed. The phenomenon is relatively widespread in spoken English, American English in particular, but it can also be observed in other languages. Perhaps, because of its rising popularity among language users, contrastive reduplication has attracted some attention in linguistics. The paper reviews the phenomenon by presenting existing definitions of contrastive reduplication and showing how it differs from other types of reduplication.

The most conspicuous difference seems to be that while reduplication has been studied mostly from a morphological perspective, contrastive reduplication turns out to be essentially pragmatic in nature. Previous analyses of this intriguing phenomenon have already indicated its context-dependence but they typically restrict the range of meanings conveyed by it to prototypical interpretations or a list of specific readings. Accounting for contrastive reduplication along the lines of Relevance Theory has the advantage of providing a unified explanation of how it works and what speakers may mean by it. The analysis put forward in the paper shows that contrastive reduplication is functionally similar to 'hedges' in that it is another linguistic device used to signal the need for concept adjustment, more specifically, for the narrowing of a lexicalized concept. Re-describing contrastive reduplication as involving procedural meaning helps explain in detail how it works and how it is different from similar and potentially confusable phenomena such as repetition (epizeuxis).

In his chapter **"On the Origin and Meaning of Secondary Interjections: A Relevance-Theoretic Proposal,"** Manuel Padilla Cruz focuses on so-called 'secondary' interjections and suggests an explanation of their origin and expressive potential by resorting to the relevance-theoretic approach to lexical pragmatics. Secondary interjections (e.g. *Hell!* or *Good!*) have attracted much less attention than primary interjections (e.g. *ugh!* or *phew!*): researchers have mainly concentrated on their sociolinguistic distribution and language-dependent idiosyncratic properties as well as on their meaning in social contexts. The origin of secondary interjections is typically explained in terms of 'grammaticalization', a process which causes lexical items to develop certain grammatical functions, and 'subjectification', a process whereby words acquire new functions allowing for the recovery of the speaker's internal state or subjective attitude. However, as insightfully observed by Padilla Cruz, this type of explanation does not make it clear what sets these two processes in operation, or in other words, what underlies such shifts of grammatical category. He goes on to suggest that the process of grammaticalization leading to the emergence of secondary interjections is tightly linked with the operation of lexical pragmatic processes of concept adjustment – more specifically, with the process of concept broadening. Due to this process, the concepts encoded by content words (nouns, verbs, adverbs, adjectives) acquire more general (abstract) meanings that will ultimately shift towards the emotions or attitudes associated with the initial lexically encoded concepts. Interestingly, the origin of secondary interjections is explained along the same lines as the origin of overextensions produced by children in early lexical development, discussed from a Relevance Theory

perspective by Wałaszewska (2011). According to Padilla Cruz, what makes secondary interjections and children's overextensions strikingly similar is that both are frequent in situations in which the right word is unavailable to speakers who, to overcome communicative difficulties, will use words encoding different though related concepts as pointers to the intended meanings. Moreover, the two types of broadenings found in children's overextensions (over-inclusions and analogical extensions) appear to correspond to two types of broadenings in the case of secondary interjections: the broadening of adjectives and adverbs will yield 'over-inclusions' and the broadening of nouns and verbs will result in 'analogical extensions'.

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PART I:

DISCOURSE AND PROCEDURAL MEANING

CHAPTER ONE

COGNITIVE ENVIRONMENT
AND INFORMATION STRUCTURE

JADWIGA LINDE-USIEKNIEWICZ,
UNIVERSITY OF WARSAW, POLAND

1. Introduction

This paper explores the applicability of one of the fundamental concepts of Relevance Theory – that of cognitive environment, particularly the notion that "when you communicate, your intention is to alter the cognitive environment of your addressees" (Sperber and Wilson 1986, 46) – to a field that may be seen as far afield from the central concerns of Relevance Theory: developing a re-definition of the basic categories used in describing the information structure of sentences and/or utterances.[1]

The re-definition in question was first conceived as a part of a larger project of devising some kind of framework within which "[s]ome surface phenomena, mainly considered peripheral ... can be explained within the language system as the result of conflicts, compromises and sometimes collaboration between syntax, semantics, and information structure" (Linde-Usiekniewicz 2012a, 28). There is no reasonable doubt that syntax and semantics (whichever way they are understood) should be seen as somehow working together to form sentences, or rather jointly contributing to both the surface form and to the meaning of a sentence or utterance. Similarly, information structure is often seen as a kind of interface between pure syntax and discourse.[2] Yet little attention has been paid to the idea that different modules of a language could actually be at odds with one another and the eventual surface form of an utterance could

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[1] The issue of sentences vs. utterances will be discussed below, in the section 2.4.

[2] For example such suggestion is explicit in the very title of (Erteschik-Shir 2007).

be seen as an instance of conflict resolution or a compromise.[3] However, such a vision of language, or rather of language use, has provided some interesting insights into several syntactic patterns (Linde-Usiekniewicz 2012a, 2012b).

These earlier attempts at exploring the notion of cognitive environment to account for information structure simply lifted the concept out of its original framework; subjected it to some modifications while disregarding whether such modifications had any validity outside Relevance Theory, and introduced it into an account that did not seek any resemblance to the theory of origin (Linde-Usiekniewicz 2008, 2012a). The present paper seeks to reformulate some of this proposal in terms that would be more compatible with Relevance Theory terminology and also to substantially refine it in the light of RT tenets. The resulting proposal can be seen as an attempt to bridge the divide between functional and formal approaches to information structure.[4] On the one hand functional approaches rely too heavily on the actual communication situation, including previous discourse and even subsequent discourse, actual communication participants and other extralinguistic issues (Linde-Usiekniewicz 2012a, 89-100, 110-118), even leading to situations in which foci get confused with topics, as happens in Fortescue (2004, 159). On the other hand, purely formal approaches tend to disregard functional counterparts of formal markings – cf. Erteschik-Shir (2007, 12), where she rightly points out that fronting cannot be used as universal topic markers, since some languages allow only 'old topics' to be fronted while others both 'old' and 'new' topics. The presented proposal attempts to analyse information structure as a phenomenon closely associated with the Relevance Theory concept of procedural meaning (cf. Blakemore 1987 and subsequent refinements of this notion: Wilson and Sperber 1993; Bezuidenhout 2004; Wilson 2011).

The paper is structured as follows: section 2 presents a brief and informal outline of the speaker-oriented framework (called Encoding Grammar in Linde-Usiekniewicz 2012a) within which information structure is being defined. Some of the issues addressed are the speaker-oriented character of the proposed framework, and – as a result of its speaker-orientedness – the fact that what it seeks to describe is neither highly abstract sentences nor actual utterances, but patterns construed at a certain intermediate level of abstraction, i.e. utterance-types. Section 3 contains some arguments in favor of including information structure in

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[3] This kind of thinking about language in general resembles, albeit very broadly, the basic tenets of Optimality Theory; however, the resemblance ends here.
[4] The distinction between formal and functional approaches is taken from Erteschik-Shir 2007, 72ff.

linguistic description, in spite of Sperber and Wilson's (1986, 216-217) opinion that the "theme-rheme distinction [and other distinctions discussed by them, like topic, comment, background, presupposition, etc.] has no place in technical descriptive vocabulary of either linguistics or pragmatics." Section 4 presents the proposed re-definition of information structure, while section 5 deals with two apparent fallacies of this proposal, ones indeed brought to light by the very attempt to reformulate the original proposal in RT terms. Section 6 briefly summarizes the departures from Relevance Theory tenets necessary to refine the presented framework and points out some of its advantages.

2. A Brief Outline of the Framework

2.1 The Starting Point

The Encoding Grammar framework presented in Linde-Usiekniewicz (2012a) – devised to discuss the division of labor between semantics, syntax, and information structure as a putative conflict and eventual compromise between them – is a multilayered one, thus resembling in that aspect the Meaning ⇔ Text Model developed by Igor Mel'čuk (cf. Mel'čuk 2012, 85-161 for a recent survey) upon which it heavily draws. However, in contrast to MTM, which models mapping both meanings into corresponding (surface) texts and (surface) texts into their corresponding meanings, the framework presented here is one-dimensional and concerns itself only with how the meaning is delivered by the speaker to her audience.[5]

Assuming that there are conflicts between semantics, syntax and information structure in a language (or in languages in general), it is not the language itself that is resolving these conflicts, but the speaker, who works out a judicious compromise between what she wants to explicitly deliver to her audience and what the language she speaks allows her

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[5] Some terminological clarifications are in order here. First, the term 'speaker' is used in this paper in the RT sense, i.e. referring to the communicator, and should not be confused with the notion of 'speaker' as a language user. Similarly, the set of potential addressees and/or hearers are referred to as 'audience'. Following RT's long established convention, the speaker is invariably referred to as *she*, while for audience the pronoun *he* is applied. Secondly, the notion of 'meaning' used in a vague way will be elucidated in the following subsection, though it roughly covers what within RT is split into conceptual and procedural meaning. Thirdly, it is claimed within the framework that both kinds of meaning are in fact encoded in order to be delivered to the audience.

actually to encode. Secondly, it is the speaker who actually makes the choices about what to encode and what to leave for her audience to infer, moreover, it is she who has all the available linguistic means to hand and makes appropriate choices about how to encode her meaning.

The Encoding Grammar framework is therefore explicitly process-oriented, though it falls short of being an actual model of utterance production. Here the framework differs radically not only from MTM, but also from Functional Discourse Grammar, which "is a pattern model that is inspired by process without seeking to model the latter" (Hengeveld and Mackenzie 2008, 24). By the same token, and again in contrast to both MTM and FDG, the potential process of utterance understanding cannot be held as a simple reversal of encoding procedures.

The speaker modeled within Encoding Grammar shares some of the characteristics of the speaker represented within Relevance Theory, inasmuch that she is a rational being, concerned about effort involved in verbal communication, but, in contrast to RT speaker's considerateness for her audience, in the model she is construed as if she were an out and out egotist, whose ultimate and actually only goal were to deliver her meaning to the best of her and the language's abilities.

However, the notion of such an 'idealized' speaker is restricted only to encoding phenomena as described within the framework. The considerate behavior of the RT speaker is seen as corresponding to choices about what to encode and deliver explicitly to the audience and what to (possibly) leave to inference. These choices in real communication may in fact be geared to the speaker's assumptions about her audience's cognitive environment, but the model focuses on how they may depend directly on the encoding means a particular language offers.[6] At the same time, she is construed as relying on being able to deliver to her audience a linguistic entity (comprising a complete string of sounds/gestures or characters together with associated sense[7]) at a lump. Thus it is partly immaterial to her where in the sequence of linguistic units some part of meaning is delivered and what initial hypotheses her audience draws from partial apprehending of what she says. This element of the framework is postulated in conscious disregard of the claim, made among others by Hengeveld and Mackenzie (2008, 24), that language production is incremental. Another important restriction is that the framework deals with

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[6] As one of the anonymous reviewers has pointed out, there is considerable psycholinguistic evidence about even very young children adapting the level of informativness of their utterances to their audience's cognitive environments.

[7] Thus the speaker can in fact deliver to her audience a spoken, written, or signed version of her message.

units that would roughly correspond to sentences (or even truncated sentences) as to their size, and not to larger chunks of discourse. All these restrictions on the Encoding Grammar model are self-imposed with conscious disregard of the various complexities of actual communication.

The way Encoding Grammar framework is devised could be seen as an attempt at reconciliation between the 'principle of effability' of Katz (1981, 226) and its rejection by Relevance Theory (Sperber and Wilson 1996, 191-193). Here the "possibility [or rather implied impossibility – JLU] of two people having exactly the same thought" (Sperber and Wilson 1996, 92) is immaterial, since the framework is meant only to show how the same speaker may sometimes be able to 'say' (understood here in its informal sense) or explicitly deliver the same 'message' or 'information' (again informally understood) in different languages, and sometimes she may not. As many bilingual individuals know and have commented, there are some things that are more easily sayable in one language than in another.

To account for this, Encoding Grammar has the idea of conflicts built in into the very notion of semantics. On the one hand a speaker has some information to deliver, and on the other the language she will speak may not offer her an easy way of saying it or even no way at all. To illustrate this point let us imagine a female speaker who wants to inform her audience that she has called her female lawyer.[8] Should the speaker be talking in Polish, she would say:

(1)   Zadzwoniłam do mojej prawniczki.
           Lit. 'I called-FEMININE to my-FEMININE lawyer-FEMININE'

Here the gender of the original speaker is encoded in the verb-form, while the gender of the lawyer is encoded as part of meaning of the noun *prawniczka.* (This distinction corresponds to the distinction between procedural and conceptual meaning, which is crucial to RT, cf. Blakemore 1987; Wilson and Sperber 1993; Bezuidenhout 2004; Wilson 2011). However, should the same speaker be talking in English she would say

(2)   I called my lawyer.

But in (2) she cannot easily include the gender of the lawyer in the encoded conceptual meaning, because English lacks a single lexeme to that effect. One option would be to encode the lawyer's gender separately

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[8] The example is based on an adapted quote from Amanda Cross, *Sweet Death, Kind Death*, 1984, New York; Ballantine, p. 88.

and explicitly, as female lawyer, but this may likely invite unwanted effects in English (possibly the speaker being perceived as pedantic or intentionally and militantly anti-sexist). The other is to leave (2) as it stands, thus risking that her audience may entertain some wrong (possibly sexist) assumptions as to the actual gender of the lawyer. The difference between (1) and (2) illustrates how a particular language restricts possibilities of delivering certain information. It also shows the difference between the 'thought' an individual may have (and even want to convey to her audience) and the meaning encoded in the string actually produced, referred to as 'semantic representation' of that string. Even though for the sake of our example we assumed it was the same speaker saying (1) in Polish and (2) in English, while the gender of the speaker and of the lawyer are elements of the semantic representation of (1) they cannot be construed as being elements of the semantic representation of (2).

However, at the level of semantic representation the distinction between 'conceptual' and 'procedural' is immaterial: the semantic representation of (1) is construed to contain information about the gender of the two individuals. Whether some elements of the semantic representation would be eventually delivered as encoded conceptual meaning or procedurally encoded meaning will depend on many factors, including the amount of information to be delivered within a sentence-like string and the place some of the linguistic elements would occupy within that string.

To illustrate these points let us go back to the original novel on which (1) and (2) have been based. In the story, the speaking protagonist[9] actually informs the detective that the said lawyer has given her some advice. Thus the original quote is:

(3)   I called my lawyer, in one of those midtown firms, and she said...[10]

Here the speaker can rely on the procedurally encoded meaning of the pronoun *she*, together with the procedural contribution of the intonation pattern and particularly the absence of prominent stress on she, to give rise to a procedurally derived co-reference of *my lawyer* and *she*. Thus Encoding Grammar claims that the gender of the lawyer is encoded within (3) and is a part of its semantic representation. It is however the presence

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[9] Who is in fact male, but here presented as female, to allow us to refer to all speakers as *she* without creating an unnecessary confusion.
[10] The example is truncated because what the lawyer said is immaterial to our analysis.

of the second clause in (3) that allows the speaker to encode the gender of the lawyer. It is therefore possible that the analysis of (3) within some RT-inspired accounts of utterance processing (e.g. Wedgwood 2005; Sax 2011) would most likely see (3) as carrying no reference to the lawyer's gender in the first clause – since it cannot be decoded from the first clause, just as it could not be decoded from (1) – and having it delivered to the audience only in the second clause. Yet, for Encoding Grammar in (3) the gender of the lawyer is a part of its semantic representation as a whole: it is the gender of the lawyer that allows the speaker to choose the feminine pronoun to make the co-referentiality explicit. On the other hand, it is also the fact that in (3) the word lawyer precedes the word *she* and not vice-versa, that allows the speaker to deliver the gender of the lawyer as procedurally encoded meaning.

As already mentioned, at the level of the semantic representation, Encoding Grammar draws no distinction between conceptual meanings and procedural meanings, though, as it has been shown in (3) and will be discussed in more detail in the following sections, the semantic representation is delivered to the audience through both kinds of linguistic items identified within RT: those associated with encoded conceptual meaning and those associated with procedurally encoded meaning. The nature of the semantic representation will be discussed in more detail in the following section.

The story of how semantic representations are turned into sentence-like strings runs in this framework as follows. The deep syntactic module matches appropriate chunks of meaning with signifieds of linguistic signs[11] of a given language as precisely as possible. Thus in (3) the chunk 'female lawyer' was matched with the sense of the word *lawyer*, with the bit 'female' left unencoded. At this stage of encoding the second mention of 'female lawyer' remains unencoded (i.e. not matched with the pronoun *she*, but left as 'female lawyer', because the choice which of the two instances of reference to the same individual will be encoded nominally and which will be encoded pronominally depends on the eventual linearization of all constituents, since swapping the places of *my lawyer* and *she,* as in (4), would encode something totally different

(4)   I called her, and my lawyer, in one of those midtown firms, said...

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[11] Within this framework what has previously been referred to as words and morphemes are seen as linguistic signs in the Saussurean sense: their surface appearance (previously called 'strings') corresponds to 'signifiers' and their meaning to 'signifieds'.