

Relevance-Theoretic Lexical Pragmatics

Relevance-Theoretic Lexical Pragmatics:

Theory and Applications

By

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INTRODUCTION

RELEVANCE-THEORETIC LEXICAL PRAGMATICS

It has been nearly thirty years since the publication of Dan Sperber and Deirdre Wilson's *Relevance: Communication and cognition*, which presented a comprehensive, but at the same time surprisingly coherent, account of human communication, cognition and language use, laying the groundwork for what was to become one of the most influential theories in the area of pragmatics. Since then, the theory has developed in a number of directions and has been applied to a wide range of linguistic and pragmatic phenomena.

Around the same time, in parallel with the development of relevance theory, a new field of study has been gradually emerging from the investigation of how word meanings become modified in use. It is not a coincidence that two major groups of scholars mostly responsible for the development of this new field, which got off the ground in the 1990s, acknowledge their debt to Grice's ideas, even if some of these ideas have been rejected. (It is not accidental, either, that Grice's papers were collected in 1989 in one volume under the title *Studies in the way of words*.)

There have been several important articles and projects using relevance theory to describe lexical pragmatics as an area of study or analyse particular lexical pragmatic phenomena, but what is urgently needed is to gather the lexical-pragmatic threads of the relevance-theoretic research, weave them together, and present them as a whole cloth, especially given that there is no sufficiently exhaustive discussion of lexical pragmatics from other perspectives than relevance theory either.

The goal of this volume is two-fold: to investigate the area of lexical pragmatics by showing its origin, scope, development and different perspectives from which it can be approached as well as to discuss it from the perspective of relevance theory, by examining the basic theoretical assumptions and analysing selected phenomena. Apart from discussing theoretical considerations, the aim is to demonstrate how the theory can be

applied to real linguistic and pragmatic phenomena. The first three chapters are more theoretical, whereas the last three also include analyses of specific (types of) expressions and phenomena.

Chapter One “Lexical Pragmatics” presents the origins, definitions and general assumptions of lexical pragmatics, and attempts to outline its scope by enumerating and briefly describing the range of phenomena subsumed under the term by various authors.

Chapter Two “Relevance-Theoretic Pragmatics” examines the basic assumptions of relevance theory about meaning and communication which generally or specifically affect lexical changes, showing the place of lexical modulation in the relevance-theoretic model of utterance interpretation.

Chapter Three “Word Meanings: Concepts and Procedures” discusses how word meaning can be represented and which of the available positions about the nature of concepts is assumed by relevance theory. It is demonstrated that the theory additionally provides a complex apparatus for describing various types of information associated with concepts based on the fundamental distinction between representation and computation.

Chapter Four “Ad Hoc Concept Construction” shows where the idea of ‘ad hoc concepts’ comes from and how it fits in the relevance-theoretic framework. Types of ad hoc concept construction are described and exemplified, including the postulated continuum of loose uses, which reinforces the foundation of a unitary approach to lexical pragmatics. The chapter also reveals an internal dispute within relevance theory about the status of ad hoc concepts.

Chapter Five “Metaphor in Relevance-Theoretic Lexical Pragmatics” singles out one type of loose use, which in relevance theory is claimed not to be qualitatively different from other types of lexical modulation, even taking into consideration the force of creative metaphors and a variety of poetic effects. Unfortunately, it is also shown that, with the earlier approach to metaphor having been superseded by a new one, metaphor is currently the subject of an internal conflict within relevance theory.

Chapter Six “Lexical Blending: Towards a Lexical-Pragmatic Account” extends the scope of lexical pragmatics by analysing pragmatic aspects of the phenomenon usually discussed from the perspective of word-formation, namely neologisms produced by lexical blending.

Finally, the closing chapter, “Concluding remarks”, follows directly from the discussions and analyses presented in the previous chapters in an attempt to answer the questions asked about the theory and its applications and to indicate further directions of research for lexical pragmatics within relevance theory.

CHAPTER ONE

LEXICAL PRAGMATICS

1. Introduction

The idea that quite a few changes in word meanings go beyond semantics may be traced back to Grice and Searle, but lexical pragmatics as a field of study has emerged much more recently. The aim of this chapter is to outline its origins, present definitions, scope, general assumptions and methodology as well as to review the most influential frameworks within which it is investigated. First, the insights from earlier authors (McCawley, Searle, Grice) are discussed as ideas that possibly gave rise to the emergence of lexical pragmatics. Then, existing definitions are provided, incidentally revealing what is probably the first attested use of the term. Furthermore, major approaches to lexical pragmatics are listed, divided into neo- and post-Gricean ones. The former are described in greater detail, including in particular the conceptions advocated by Horn and Levinson as well as Blutner's optimality theory, the first attempt to formalise lexical pragmatics; the post-Gricean relevance-theoretic approach will be discussed in Chapter 2 and will serve as a theoretical framework for the discussion of various aspects of lexical pragmatics in the remaining chapters. Finally, examples of diverse phenomena subsumed so far under the term 'lexical pragmatics' are described and classified into two broad groups. The first group, that of narrowing, encompasses (auto)hyponymy, pragmatic combinations, systematic polysemy, lexical blocking and contrastive reduplication; the second, that of broadening, includes approximation, metaphorical extension, predicate transfer and category extension.

2. Origins of lexical pragmatics

The last decades of the twentieth century saw the acceleration in the development of a relatively new field of linguistic investigation, called lexical pragmatics. The rapid development of this field shows that much of the interest of pragmatic theory has shifted from the meaning of whole

utterances to the meaning of single words used in utterances in different contexts. Undoubtedly, this move has brought to the foreground the notorious question of the division of labour between semantics and pragmatics since it is not easy to determine which aspects of the meanings of a particular word in various contexts derive from its lexically encoded (semantic) meaning and which are constructed pragmatically (see e.g. Németh and Bibok 2001, 1).

Research into the field of lexical pragmatics has been conducted by philosophers, cognitive scientists, and linguists, in particular those interested in pragmatics.¹ Currently, it is being investigated within (at least) three pragmatic frameworks; hence, there are three major conceptions of lexical pragmatics: neo-Gricean lexical pragmatics (endorsed by a group of pragmatic theories mainly based on work by Laurence Horn, Stephen Levinson and Jay Atlas), neo-Gricean optimality-theoretic lexical pragmatics (based on work by Reinhard Blutner) and post-Gricean relevance-theoretic lexical pragmatics (emerging from work by Deirdre Wilson and Robyn Carston).² The term ‘post-Gricean’ is broader in that it is applicable to “all those approaches to pragmatics that take the Gricean inferential approach to communication as their starting point” (Carston 1998, 227, n. 1). The term ‘neo-Gricean’ only involves those theories which not only adhere to the inferential view of communication, but also, in one way or another, accept (with modifications) Grice’s Cooperative Principle and maxims. Relevance theory, as will be shown in Chapter 2, is a post-Gricean rather than a neo-Gricean pragmatic theory.

In the neo-Gricean tradition, Blutner (2011, 101; see also Horn 2008, 29; Huang 2009; Allan 2012, 229) traces the idea of lexical pragmatics to McCawley’s 1978 paper, in which the author argues that “a lexical item and a syntactically complex equivalent of it may make different contributions to the interpretation of a sentence without making different contributions to its semantic structure” (McCawley 1978, 257). Huang (2009, 119) goes even further and detects more than a whiff of interest in

¹ It is worth noting that much of the research in cognitive linguistics, or to be more precise, in cognitive semantics, has centred on a number of phenomena falling in the scope of lexical pragmatics. Cognitive semantics, however, does not sharply distinguish between semantic and pragmatic knowledge and assumes instead that these kinds of knowledge form a continuum (Evans and Green 2006, 215-216). Thus, the question of studying pragmatics, much less lexical pragmatics, does not arise for cognitive semanticists, or cognitive linguists in general.

² I follow Carston (1998, 227, n. 1) in making a distinction between the terms ‘neo-Gricean’ and ‘post-Gricean’.

the pragmatics of the lexicon in the writings of the nineteenth-century British philosophers John Stuart Mill and Augustus de Morgan.

Let us consider the now classic examples discussed by McCawley:

- (1) a. Black Bart killed the sheriff.
b. Black Bart caused the sheriff to die.

They show that a simple lexical item *kill* and its syntactically complex equivalent *cause to die* contribute to the interpretation of the respective sentences in a different way: (1a) brings to mind the stereotype of murder, whereas (1b) shows that the death was, for example, the result of an accident or a magic curse. McCawley suggests that the difference in linguistic encoding and interpretation is not related to any idiosyncratic restrictions on possible interpretations attached to lexical items, but derives from pragmatic principles such as Grice's (1975) maxims of conversation, which explains the systematicity and predictability of such phenomena.

From the perspective of relevance theory, as suggested by Allott (2010, 109-110), it is more plausible to search for the roots of lexical pragmatics in Searle's (1980) famous discussion of the verb *cut* and of how it acquires different interpretations when used in different linguistic and non-linguistic contexts. According to Searle (1980, 227), "the literal meaning of a sentence or expression only determines a set of truth conditions given a set of background assumptions and practices," which means that in different contexts the same sentence or expression with the same literal meaning may determine different truth conditions "even though the semantic content is not indexical or ambiguous and there is no question of vagueness ..." (*ibid.*). Let me focus on two of Searle's examples in order to shed light on his argumentation.

- (2) a. Bill cut the grass.
b. Sally cut a cake. (Searle 1980, 221)

Both sentences illustrate the literal occurrence of *cut*, yet the verb's contribution to the truth conditions of these sentences is different. This is related to the fact that in (2a), *cut* is likely to be interpreted as 'mow', whereas in (2b) it is understood as 'slice'. Moreover, it is doubtful if the sentence *Sally cut a cake* would be regarded as true if Sally tried mowing the cake.

It might be argued that *cut* is simply ambiguous in the same way as the word *bank*, which has two distinct senses of 'money bank' and 'river

bank', but since there are more examples of sentences involving the literal meaning of the verb *cut* (e.g. (3a)–(3c), such a proposal would trigger an unacceptably high number of senses.³

- (3) a. The barber cut Tom's hair.
 b. I just cut my skin.
 c. The tailor cut the cloth. (Searle 1980, 221)

Additionally, the two senses of the noun *bank* are not related in any way, whereas, as Searle (1980, 224) observes, all the occurrences of the verb *cut* listed above have “a common semantic content roughly involving the notion of a physical separation by means of the pressure of some more or less sharp instrument.”

It might also be argued that the verb *cut* is interpreted differently in the expressions *cut the grass* ('mow') and *cut a cake* ('slice') since its meaning is derived from the combination of the meanings of *cut* and its grammatical object. This conception (referred to as 'indexical') is based on the idea of linguistic meaning as a function – the function associated to *cut* is fixed and unchanging, and its different values depend on the different arguments the verb can take (e.g. *grass*, *cake*, *hair*). Searle rejects this conception as it is fairly easy to show its faultiness by devising contexts in which *cutting grass* does not mean mowing and *cutting cakes* is not slicing. For example, in the context of a company selling strips of grass turf to people who want instant lawns, *cutting grass* will be taken to mean 'slicing' grass into pieces. It is also easy to imagine a situation in which *cutting cakes* means 'trimming' their tops off instead of slicing them (Searle 1980, 224-225).

It needs to be mentioned that in their overview of the field of lexical pragmatics, Wilson and Carston (2007, 230) admit that “[t]he advantages of distinguishing semantic and pragmatic aspects of word meaning have long been recognised in pragmatically-oriented approaches to the philosophy of language, and were the starting point for Grice's [1967 – E.W.] *William James Lectures ...*” (see Grice 1989, 3-21). This shows that, from a relevance-theoretic perspective, the origins of lexical pragmatics may also be traced back to Grice's investigation of meaning. It might be said that in “Prolegomena” (Grice 1989, 3-21), Grice puts forward the idea that it is necessary to develop a theory of pragmatics in order to account for how context (use) affects semantics (meaning) to yield what is

³ The unacceptability of too high a number of senses of a word follows from 'Modified Occam's Razor', according to which “[s]enses are not to be multiplied beyond necessity” (Grice 1989, 47).

communicated. Grice (1989, 4) suggests that “... the precept that one should be careful not to confuse meaning and use is perhaps on the way toward being as handy a philosophical vade-mecum as once was the precept that one should be careful to identify them.” Undoubtedly, it is important for Grice to have a clear distinction between the meaning of an expression and other (pragmatic) aspects of its use (e.g. Neale 1992, 519; Petrus 2010, 14), which can be substantiated by the following quote from his “Reply to Richards”:

In my own case, a further impetus towards a demand for the provision of a visible theory underlying ordinary discourse came from my work on the idea of Conversational Implicature, which emphasized the radical importance of distinguishing (to speak loosely) what *our words* say or imply from what *we* in uttering them imply... (Grice 1986, 59, italics in original)

Conversational implicatures, as originally envisaged by Grice, are non-truth-conditional inferences which can be worked out on the basis of the assumption that both the speaker and the hearer observe the Cooperative Principle and its maxims: Quantity, Quality, Relation and Manner (Grice 1989, 31). The Cooperative Principle, first presented by Grice in his *William James Lectures* at Harvard University in 1967, was formulated as a general set of guidelines that participants in an ordinary conversation are expected to follow:

Make your conversational contribution such as is required at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged. (Grice 1989, 26)

Grice (1989, 368-369) regards the Cooperative Principle as ‘a super-principle’ or ‘a supreme principle’ on which the maxims are dependent. The maxims identified by Grice are as follows (1989, 26-27):

1. Quantity:

- (i) Make your contribution as informative as is required for the current purposes of the conversation.
- (ii) Do not make your contribution more informative than is required.

2. Quality:

- (i) Do not say what you believe to be false.
- (ii) Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence.

3. Relation:

- (i) Be relevant.

4. Manner:

- (i) Be clear.
- (ii) Avoid ambiguity.
- (iii) Be brief.
- (iv) Be orderly.

It is worth emphasising that the Cooperative Principle is not to be understood as a prescriptive norm of conversational behaviour, telling people how to behave in conversation. It is rather intended to be viewed as a norm of successful conversational behaviour. More specifically, it is descriptive in that it serves as a description of what conversationalists do when engaged in conversation. The general tendency for people is to be cooperative in conversation since they aim at being understood. However, as pointed out by Chapman (2000, 131), “[the] full significance [of the Cooperative Principle – E.W.] to interpretation only emerges when it is apparently not being followed.”

Grice’s account of conversation is inextricably linked to his account of meaning in use, in particular, to his consideration of the relationship between meaning and intention. Underlying Grice’s analysis of conversation is his basic assumption that successful communication involves both the speaker’s intention to communicate and the hearer’s recognition of this intention. From the vantage point of pragmatics, this assumption is one of the most fundamental ideas in pragmatic analysis (see also Chapman 2000, 131).

3. The term ‘lexical pragmatics’

In relevance theory, the term ‘lexical pragmatics’ was first explicitly used by Wilson in her 2003 paper “Relevance and lexical pragmatics” though the most important ideas discussed there can be derived from earlier works by Carston, and Sperber and Wilson (in particular, Carston 1997; 2002; Sperber and Wilson 1998). Wilson (2003, 273) defines ‘lexical pragmatics’ as “a ... branch of linguistics that investigates the processes by which linguistically-specified (‘literal’) word meanings are modified in use.” The central idea behind this definition is that the contribution of lexical items to utterance interpretation involves more than simply accessing the lexically encoded meanings and putting them in the right slots in the corresponding semantic representations (e.g. Clark 2013, 240).

It seems that the term ‘lexical pragmatics’ has been coined by Robert Mercer (1991, 224) “to emphasize the significant differences between the semantic and pragmatic aspects of a lexical item’s meaning” in his paper on the applicability of the formal default logic approach to the problem of natural-language presuppositions against the background of Grice’s maxims of conversation. The motivation for this coinage comes from his observation that while the semantics of a lexical item remains constant across contexts, the pragmatics of a lexical item has to be determined on the basis of the context in which it occurs (Mercer 1991, 224-225).

It is interesting to note that the creation of the term ‘lexical pragmatics’ is usually credited to Reinhard Blutner, which can be seen from the following quote from Horn (2008, 29): “The term “lexical pragmatics” itself seems not to have predated Blutner (1998)..”⁴ Undoubtedly, Blutner’s 1998 “Lexical pragmatics” is one of the first papers which explicitly and fully address the nature and scope of lexical pragmatics. In this paper, Blutner defines lexical pragmatics as “a research field that tries to give a systematic and explanatory account of pragmatic phenomena that are connected with the semantic underspecification of lexical items” (1998, 115). In his conception, Blutner assumes that lexical items are semantically underspecified and thus require a certain pragmatic mechanism (based on world and discourse knowledge) to “[fill] the gap of selecting the ‘right’ specification from the set of semantically possible ones” (*ibid.*, 120). He views lexical pragmatics as an area of pragmatics that has naturally come into existence as a remedy for problems encountered by lexical semantics in the traditional sense (understood as truth-functional static semantics of lexical items) (Blutner 1998, 116), such as the pragmatics of adjectives, systematic polysemy or blocking phenomena. These issues, Blutner argues, fall in the scope of lexical pragmatics and as such will be briefly discussed in section 5.

In order to characterise the field of lexical pragmatics from a methodological point of view, Blutner (1998, 139-143) enumerates what he calls ‘four theses of lexical pragmatics’:

(a) **Lexical pragmatics is non-compositional.**

Lexical pragmatics rejects the so-called principle of pragmatic compositionality, according to which “it is possible to decompose the lexical items of an (sic!) compound expression into conceptual components which combined together determine the conceptual interpretation of the whole expression” (*ibid.*, 139). Lexical

⁴ Actually, the term already appears in Blutner *et al.* (1996).

pragmatics seeks to combine semantics, which is compositional, with a mechanism of conversational implicature, which is non-compositional by nature.

(b) **Lexical pragmatics crucially involves non-representational means.**

Blutner claims that means for manipulating representations are non-representational in that they do not need to be represented mentally in order to exist or to be effective in determining cognitive activities. Examples of non-representational means can be found among notions such as “salience, cue validity, diagnostic value, informativeness, surprise, relevance, frequency of use” (*ibid.*, 141).

(c) **Lexical pragmatics crucially involves economy principles.**

More specifically, “[e]conomy principles are crucially involved in determining how nonrepresentational parameters control the selection and suppression of representations.” (*ibid.*, 141)

(d) **Lexical pragmatics has to explain when conversational implicatures are cancellable and when not.**

It clearly follows from Blutner’s presentation of the field of lexical pragmatics that he is strongly convinced that the best framework for realising the goals listed above is (neo-)Gricean pragmatics.

4. Neo-Gricean approaches to pragmatics

As can be seen from the above discussion, Grice’s theory of meaning and implicature can be viewed as the foundation of lexical pragmatics since each of the major approaches to it either uses Grice’s ideas as a starting point to develop a new theoretical framework (post-Gricean relevance theory) or accepts them in a revised form (neo-Gricean pragmatics). In the neo-Gricean tradition, Grice’s system of maxims subsumed under the Cooperative Principle has been subjected to various revisions and reformulations. On the one hand, there has been Leech’s (1983) proposal that the maxims should be proliferated. In particular, Leech suggests adding his Politeness Principle (with its own system of maxims such as Tact, Generosity, Approbation, to mention just a few) to the Cooperative Principle, not as a subsidiary maxim, but as a necessary component co-ordinate in nature to the Gricean principle. On the other hand, there have been attempts to reduce the number of maxims, of which the most

influential are two neo-Gricean models: Horn's two-principled and Levinson's three-principled systems.

4.1 Horn's two-principled system

In order to regulate the economy of linguistic information and to eliminate the putative redundancy of the constraints set by the Gricean maxims, Horn (1984; 1989; 2007) suggests a radical move of compressing the conversational maxims and submaxims, all but Quality, into two fundamental principles: the lower-bounding Q-Principle and the upper-bounding R-Principle. The maxim of Quality is considered as privileged since Horn (2004, 7), like Grice (1989, 371), treats its observance as a prerequisite for satisfying the other maxims.

Q-principle:

Make your contribution sufficient: Say as much as you can (given the R-Principle).

R-principle:

Make your contribution necessary: Say no more than you must (given the Q-Principle).

(Horn 1989, 194)

On this view, the Q-Principle collects the first submaxim of Quantity and the first two submaxims of Manner. The principle is hearer-oriented in that it guarantees that the content of an utterance is sufficient, or that the strongest possible statement is made and no further interpretation is needed. It can be systematically exploited to induce upper-bounding implicatures (saying '...*p*...' implicates '...at most *p*...'). In other words, the implicatures it yields are 'negative' as they typically arise from the calculation of what could have been said in place of what was actually said. Negative implicatures are standardly illustrated with scalar implicatures. Such implicatures depend for their derivation on a linguistic scale (so-called Horn-scale), which involves alternative expressions of the same grammatical category arranged linearly "by degree of *informativeness* or semantic strength" (Levinson 1983, 133, italics in original). For example, *all* and *some* form an entailment scale <*all*, *some*> as the meaning of *some* is included in *all*; hence *all* is more informative or stronger than *some*. If, in her assertion, the speaker subscribes to *some* (a weaker point on the scale), she⁵ then implicates that *all* (a stronger one) does not obtain. An example of Q-based scalar implicature is given in (4):

⁵ For ease of exposition, the speaker is referred to as 'she' and the hearer as 'he'.

- (4) Some of the students passed the exam
 +> Not all of the students passed the exam.⁶

The R-Principle comprises the maxim of Relation, the second submaxim of Quantity, and the last two submaxims of Manner. It is speaker-oriented since it involves the minimization of the speaker's effort through the minimization of linguistic expression. The principle can be exploited to engender lower-bounding implicatures (saying '...*p*...' implicates '...more than *p*...'). In other words, it can be used to implicate that the statement produced is not the strongest possible whereby the hearer is invited to attempt further interpretation. Implicatures based on the R-Principle can be exemplified by indirect speech acts or euphemisms. Two examples of R-based implicatures are given below in (5)–(6):

- (5) I broke a finger yesterday.
 +> I broke my finger.
- (6) Have you got a watch?
 +> If you have got a watch and know the time, please tell me what time it is.

The interaction between the Q- and R-principles can be seen in what Horn (1984) calls 'the division of pragmatic labour':

The use of a marked (relatively complex and/or prolix) expression when a corresponding unmarked (simpler, less 'effortful') alternative expression is available tends to be interpreted as conveying a marked message (one which the unmarked alternative would not or could not have conveyed). (Horn 1984, 22)

In other words, the R-principle takes precedence until the use of a marked expression causes an implicature based on the Q-principle. For example, in (7a) below, the use of the unmarked expression, the verb *stop*, implicates (on the basis of the R-principle) that he simply switched off the machine in a stereotypical way, whereas, in (7b), the use of the marked periphrastic causative expression triggers an implicature (based on the Q-principle) that he did that in a marked way by pulling the plug or throwing something into the machine (Horn 2004, 16-17).

- (7) a. He stopped the machine.
 b. He got the machine to stop.

⁶ The symbol +> represents 'con conversationally implicates'.

The way the two principles interact shows that they are antithetical, but at the same time complementary, to each other. They may be viewed as embodying a fundamental tension between being sufficiently explicit and being economical in language.

4.2 Levinson's three-principled system

In Levinson's (1987, 72-73) view, Horn's bipartite model is not satisfactory as it fails to distinguish between 'semantic minimization', according to which "semantically general expressions [are] preferred to semantically specific ones," and 'expression minimization', which involves the preference of shorter expressions over longer ones. The problem is rooted in Horn's inconsistent characterisation of the Q-principle, which seems operative both in terms of semantic informativeness (e.g. Horn-scales) and in terms of surface (expression) complexity (as indicated by the division of pragmatic labour between Horn's Q- and R-principles). To avoid such confusion, Levinson (1987) postulates that the Gricean maxims (with the exception of Quality) should be conflated into three principles: Quantity (Grice's first submaxim of Quantity), Informativeness (Grice's second submaxim of Quantity) and Manner (Grice's first and third submaxims of Manner). In Levinson (2000), these principles are presented, not as rules or behavioural norms, but as "*inferential heuristics* which then motivate the behavioral norms" (p. 35, italics in original). The three heuristics are as follows (Levinson *ibid.*, 31-33):

Heuristic 1: What isn't said, isn't.

Heuristic 2: What is simply described, is stereotypically exemplified.

Heuristic 3: What's said in an abnormal way, isn't normal; or

Marked message indicates marked situation.

The first heuristic corresponds to the Q-principle (Quantity), the second and the third heuristics to the I-principle (Informativeness) and the M-principle (Manner), respectively. Each of the principles consists of two statements: the speaker's maxim (what the principle enjoins the speaker to do) and the recipient's corollary (what the principle licenses the addressee to infer) (Levinson 1987, 67). The principles are presented below:

Q-principle

Speaker's maxim: Do not provide a statement that is informationally weaker than your knowledge of the world allows, unless providing an informationally stronger statement would contravene the I-principle.

Specifically, select the informationally strongest paradigmatic alternate that is consistent with the facts.

Recipient's corollary: Take it that the speaker made the strongest statement consistent with what he knows, and therefore that:

- a. if the speaker asserts $A(W)$, where A is a sentence frame and W an informationally weaker expression than S , and the contrastive expressions $\langle S, W \rangle$ form a Horn scale ..., then one can infer that the speaker knows that the stronger statement $A(S)$ (with S substituted for W) would be false ...
- b. if the speaker asserted $A(W)$ and $A(W)$ fails to entail an embedded sentence Q , which a stronger statement $A(S)$ would entail, and $\{S, W\}$ form a contrast set, then one can infer that the speaker does not know whether Q obtains or not ... (Levinson 2000, 76)

In a simplified version of the Q-principle (Huang 2009, 125), the speaker's maxim and the recipient's corollary boil down to the following: "Do not say less than is required (bearing the I-principle in mind)" and "What is not said is not the case." According to the Q-principle (recipient's corollary), the fact that the speaker has not used an informationally stronger expression induces the addressee to infer that the interpretation associated with the use of that expression does not obtain. As examples of implicatures based on the Q-principle, Levinson (2000, 76 and 110) gives scalar implicatures (derived from entailment (Horn) scales) and clausal implicatures (derived from contrasts between an expression that entails the subordinate clause it introduces (e.g. *know*) and another one that does not (e.g. *believe*)):

- (8) Some of my best friends are linguists.
+> Not all of my best friends are linguists.
- (9) The doctor believes that the patient will not recover.
+> The doctor may or may not know that the patient will not recover. (It is epistemically possible that the patient will not recover and it is epistemically possible that the patient will recover.)

I-Principle

Speaker's maxim: the maxim of Minimization. "Say as little as necessary"; that is, produce the minimal linguistic information sufficient to achieve your communicational ends (bearing Q in mind).

Recipient's corollary: the Enrichment Rule. Amplify the informational content of the speaker's utterance by finding the most specific interpretation, up to what you judge to be the speaker's m[eaning]-intended point, unless the speaker has broken the maxim of Minimization by using a marked or prolix expression.

In a simplified version of the M-principle (Huang 2009, 126), the speaker's maxim and the recipient's corollary state: "Do not use a marked expression without reason" and "What is said in a marked way conveys a marked message". Consequently, unlike the Q- and I-principles, both of which involve the notion of semantic informativeness, the M-principle focuses on the form of an expression: the use of a marked expression instead of its unmarked alternative is taken to mean that a stereotypical interpretation associated with the use of an unmarked expression does not hold. The principle is assumed to cover a number of phenomena, for example periphrasis (ex. 12) or repetition (ex. 13) (Levinson 2000, 137-153).

- (12) John caused the car to stop. (vs. John stopped the car.)
 +> He did that in a non-stereotypical way, i.e. he stopped the car not by pressing the foot pedal but by using the emergency brake or bumping into the wall.

(Levinson 2000, 141)

- (13) He went to bed and slept and slept.
 +> He slept longer than usual.

(Levinson 2000, 152)

In case the operation of the principles leads to the generation of inconsistent implicatures, such inconsistencies "are systematically resolved by an ordered set of priorities" (Levinson 2000, 39): $Q > M > I$ (where $>$ is read as 'defeats inconsistent'). This shows that the Q- and M-principles have priority over I, and that implicatures based on Q take precedence over those based on M.

4.3 Optimality theory

Another neo-Gricean approach which has originated in the attempt to explain certain phenomena of lexical pragmatics is Blutner's (2000) optimality theory, widely considered to be the first endeavour to formalise the field. The optimality-theoretic approach to pragmatics (e.g. Blutner 2000; 2007; 2011; Blutner and Zeevat 2009) is rooted in Horn's idea that there are two principles that guide the process of utterance interpretation such as the Q- and R-principles. According to Blutner (2007, 74-75), the Q-principle is speaker-oriented as it "compares different possible syntactic expressions that the speaker could have used to communicate the same meaning" and the R-principle is hearer-oriented in that it "compares different possible interpretations for the same syntactic expression." The

reduction of the Gricean submaxims into the principles thus formulated allows for the integration of the speaker's and the hearer's perspective. In optimality theory, these principles can be seen as corresponding to "different directions of optimization where the content of the optimization procedure is expressed by particular optimality theoretic constraints" (Blutner 2010, 175, n. 8). The procedure of optimization concerns the relation between form and meaning. Optimization is simultaneously bidirectional: it applies to both directions, from meaning to form (production), and from form to meaning (interpretation), thereby integrating the speaker's and the hearer's perspective into a simultaneous optimization procedure.

Optimality theoretic constraints can be understood as criteria for a certain task (such as expressing a thought) with respect to which the products of particular language behaviour (language expressions) are optimal. Such constraints are very general in nature and that is why they can be in conflict. An example of a conflict in interpretation could be "that between simplicity and stereotypicality on the one hand, and the need to interpret a given message completely and coherently on the other" (Zeevat 2006, 47). Because of the possibility of conflicts, violations of constraints are only to be expected, just as in the Gricean framework, where clashes between maxims, e.g. Quantity ('give all the required information') and Manner ('be brief'), will lead to the violation of one of the conflicting maxims. In optimality theory, constraints are ranked according to strength, which helps resolve conflicts among them. Optimal conflict resolutions are defined as minimal violations of the constraints (on condition that their strength is taken into account).

Blutner (2000; see also Zeevat 2006) discusses two versions of bidirectional optimality: strong and weak. According to the strong version, in a form-meaning pair, the interpretation makes the form win over other forms and the form makes the interpretation win over other interpretations. Thus, typically, the strong version yields only one optimal form-meaning pair, usually unmarked. The weak version is based on the definition of 'super-optimality' of form-meaning pairs. Blutner (2011, 108) defines a form-meaning pair as super-optimal iff "there is no other super-optimal pair with a better [i.e. less marked – E.W.] form that expresses the same meaning, and there is no other super-optimal pair with a better [i.e. less marked – E.W.] interpretation of that same form." The weak version allows for associating marked forms with marked meanings. Let me illustrate both versions of bidirectional optimality with McCawley's famous pair of examples, repeated here as (14):

- (14) a. Black Bart killed the sheriff.
 b. Black Bart caused the sheriff to die.

The unmarked form (the lexicalised verb) in (14a) is associated with the standard interpretation of killing, whereas the marked form (the periphrastic causative expression) in (14b) triggers an unusual interpretation (killing as a result of magic curses or an accident). The strong version of bidirectionality allows for associating (14a) with the standard interpretation of killing; on the other hand, it will not allow for pairing (14b) with the unusual interpretation. For economy reasons, (14b) loses out to (14a) both on the production side (marked vs. unmarked form) and on the interpretation side (unusual vs. standard interpretation). According to the weak version, (14a) as a combination of the unmarked form and the standard interpretation wins over other candidates such as (14b) with the standard interpretation or (14a) with the non-standard interpretation. This shows that (14b), which is a combination of marked form and non-standard meaning, is super-optimal and thus possible. There is no other super-optimal pair with a better interpretation of (14b) and there is no other super-optimal pair with a less marked form for the non-standard interpretation of killing (Zeevat 2006, 49).

5. The scope of lexical pragmatics

This section presents a selection of phenomena which are assumed to fall in the scope of lexical pragmatics as emerging from works of linguists of both neo-Gricean and relevance-theoretic persuasions; hence, examples come from several sources (e.g. Blutner 2011; Huang 2009; Wilson 2003). The phenomena are discussed in an essentially theory-neutral way (with respect to the neo-Gricean and relevance-theoretic approaches) with a view to showing how wide and varied the scope has grown.⁷ Even though these phenomena seem to be fairly heterogeneous, they generally fit into two broadly conceived types: narrowing and broadening, as admitted by both neo-Griceans (e.g. Huang 2009; Blutner 2011) and relevance theorists (e.g. Wilson 2003; Carston 1997; 2002). It should be emphasised that neo-Gricean lexical pragmatics typically focuses on phenomena based on some kind of narrowing, which might be related to the assumption generally endorsed by neo-Griceans (e.g. Blutner 1998; Huang 2009) that lexical meaning is underspecified. In other words, they assume that “every

⁷ The presentation is intended as a brief survey, focusing on selected phenomena. Admittedly, it is not exhaustive in view of the complexity of the field.

lexical item determines an unspecified representation” (Huang 2009, 129) and this lexical underspecification view has to be combined “with a theory of pragmatic enrichment” (*ibid.*). Some of the central topics in neo-Gricean lexical pragmatics are lexical narrowing, adjective-noun combinations, systematic polysemy, lexical blocking and contrastive reduplication.

It seems that phenomena based on broadening such as approximation, metaphorical extension or category extension have been introduced into lexical pragmatics by relevance theory, and such a scope of the field is acknowledged (if not accepted) by neo-Griceans. There are some neo-Gricean proposals which phenomena allegedly based on broadening are to be investigated by lexical pragmatics: for instance, Blutner (2011) insists that so-called ‘predicate transfer’ should also be included in the scope. Even though relevance-theoretic lexical pragmatics is interested in both narrowing and broadening, it appears to pay more attention to lexical broadenings as can be seen from the relevance-theoretic studies of approximation, metaphor, hyperbole or category extension (see Chapters 4 and 5).

5.1 Narrowing

Lexical narrowing describes the phenomenon involving the use of a lexical item to convey a more specific (restricted) meaning than the item’s lexically (semantically) encoded meaning (Huang 2009, 130; Blutner 2011, 101). It is possible to illustrate this phenomenon with Wilson’s (2003, 274) example of *drink* in *All doctors drink*, in which the verb is most likely used not to convey its lexically encoded sense of ‘drink liquid’, but to mean something more specific such as ‘drink alcohol’. Another illustration comes from Blutner (2011, 101), who shows that the verb *smoke*, as used in the request *Please smoke inside* uttered in Amsterdam, will be interpreted as ‘smoke your joint’.

5.1.1 Autohyponymy and hyponymic specialisation

The verb *drink* in the above-quoted example of lexical narrowing belongs to what is referred to as ‘autohyponymy’ (e.g. Cruse 2000; Levinson 2000) since the same form is used to express general meaning ‘drink any liquid’ and specific meaning ‘drink alcohol’. In autohyponymy (Cruse 2000, 110-111), one word is used both as a superordinate with a general default sense (e.g. *dog* ‘*Canis familiaris*’) and as its hyponym with a context-dependent more specific sense (e.g. *dog* ‘male *Canis familiaris*’). The use of such a word (with its default superordinate reading) will be typically interpreted

as its specific hyponym reading (due to the non-selection of other hyponyms having different lexical forms). In other words, the exclusion of the meaning of other hyponyms shows that the meaning of the superordinate may be narrowed to the meaning of the hyponym having the same lexical form as the superordinate. Examples (15) and (16) illustrate this type of narrowing:

- (15) John cut his *finger*.
 +> John didn't cut his thumb.
- (16) John folded the newspaper neatly into a *rectangle*.
 +> John didn't fold the newspaper neatly into a square.
- (adapted from Huang 2009, 130)

The superordinate term *finger* ('any of the five members of the hand') has two hyponyms *thumb* and *finger* ('any finger but the thumb'). Similarly, the superordinate *rectangle* ('a parallelogram with right angles') has two hyponyms *square* ('a parallelogram with right angles and with all four sides equal') and *rectangle* ('a parallelogram with right angles and with adjacent sides of unequal length'). Since the words *thumb* and *square* are not used, their meanings are considered inapplicable. Thus, the terms used in (15) and (16) will be typically interpreted as narrowed to the meanings of their hyponyms *finger* and *rectangle*, which do not overlap with the meanings of *thumb* and *square*. It has to be pointed out that the narrowed meanings cannot be part of the lexically encoded meanings of the words *finger* and *rectangle* since they are suspendable (cancellable). Both of the sentences below show that it is possible to suspend the implicatures in (15) and (16).

- (17) John cut his finger, if not his thumb.
- (18) John folded the newspaper neatly into a rectangle, if not a square.

Cruse insists that autohyponymy should be distinguished from what he calls 'hyponymic specialisation' or 'hyponymic enrichment' (2000, 121), which can be illustrated by *smoke* as used in Blutner's example above. This type of 'contextual modulation'⁸ (sense modulation) involves adding pieces of contextual information to the meaning of a lexical word, thereby making it more specific. The information thus added is compatible with the meaning of a word, but is not made explicit by the word itself. Some of

⁸ For Cruse (2000), there are two main varieties of contextual modulation of a word: enrichment (adding information) and impoverishment (removing information).

the examples showing (stereotypical) narrowings of this type are given below (Huang 2009, 131):

- (19) John had a glass of *milk* for breakfast this morning.
 +> John had a glass of **cow's milk** for breakfast this morning.
- (20) Our new *nurse* smiled at me.
 +> Our new **female nurse** smiled at me.
- (21) The baby has a *temperature*.
 +> The baby has a **high temperature**.
- (22) Something *smells* here!
 +> Something **smells bad** here!

Huang (2009, 132-133) points out that the pragmatically derived narrowed senses are not part of the lexically encoded meanings of the italicised words since each of these words can co-occur with a modifier (in bold) that would preclude such narrowed meanings with no resulting contradiction:

- (23) John had a glass of **goat's** *milk* for breakfast this morning.
- (24) Our new **male** *nurse* smiled at me.
- (25) The baby has a **low** *temperature*.
- (26) Something *smells* **nice** here!

5.1.2 Reciprocals

Blutner (2011, 101-102) suggests that the phenomenon of narrowing can be observed in the interpretation of reciprocals such as *each other*. Let me illustrate the point with the following examples (adapted from Dalrymple *et al.* 1998, 161-162):

- (27) House of Commons etiquette requires legislators to refer to each other indirectly.
- (28) Five Boston pitchers sat alongside each other.

The use of the reciprocal in (27) shows that each legislator is required to refer to every other one indirectly, whereas the use of the reciprocal in (28) shows that not every Boston pitcher is required to be related to every other player by the relation of sitting alongside (people have only two sides). The two uses of the reciprocal differ with respect to the strength of reciprocity, and the reciprocal in (27) is interpreted as stronger than the one in (28). Such an interpretation and similar cases can be best described

by the ‘strongest meaning hypothesis’ put forward by Dalrymple *et al.* (1998), according to which the reciprocal “will take on the strongest meaning that is consistent with known facts about the antecedent, the scope, and the context” (1998, 209). This means that the reciprocal *each other* has a certain minimal meaning which can be strengthened (narrowed) in different contexts.

5.1.3 The pragmatics of adjectives: Adjective-noun combinations

Another case of narrowing mentioned by Blutner (2011) involves adjective-noun combinations. In adjective-noun combinations such as *brown cow* (Blutner 1998), the meaning of the compound expression is the result of the so-called ‘intersection operation’ by means of which, to put it simplistically, the meaning of the adjective is added to the meaning of the modified noun. However, the problem is that in a large number of adjective-noun combinations, the adjective does not contribute to the meaning of the compound in a simple and fixed way; its applicability varies from context to context. The seemingly uncontroversial adjective *brown* shows this problem clearly: *a brown cow* is brown on the most of its body’s surface, *a brown book* is brown if its cover (but not necessarily pages) is overwhelmingly brown, *a brown newspaper* is brown if its pages are brown and *a brown crystal* is brown on the inside and on the outside (for discussion, see Lahav 1993, 76, quoted in Blutner 1998, 118 or Blutner 2011, 102).

Such examples show that the ‘locus of interaction’ (Cruse 2000, 77) between the combined meanings of a modifier and its head may be different even if the same adjective (or (type of) noun) is used in the combination. To illustrate the phenomenon, let me focus on often quoted combinations of colour adjectives and nouns (most of the examples from Cruse 2000, 78):

- (29) *a red hat* (whole hat is red)
a red book (outside covers are red)
a red apple (a significant portion of outer skin is red)
a yellow peach (inner flesh is yellow)
a pink grapefruit (inner flesh is pink)
red eyes (‘white’ of eyes is red)
blue eyes (iris is blue)⁹

⁹ However, in the context of Frank Herbert’s *Dune*, the expression *blue eyes* will be understood as referring to the ‘whites’ of the eyes of the Fremens living on the planet Arrakis.