

Relevance Theory Bibliography
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Final draft

Published version at <https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780199772810/obo-9780199772810-0256.xml>

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Introduction

Relevance theory attempts to provide a psychologically realistic, explicit account of communication. It makes foundational claims about both cognition in general and utterances and how they are processed in particular. The former is the cognitive principle of relevance: cognition tends to seek maximal relevance, where an input to a cognitive process is more relevant the more positive effects it has on the mind's representations of the world and less relevant the greater is the effort required to derive them. Although on this view we have a tendency to seek the greatest possible pay-off for the least possible effort, there is no general guarantee that an input to a cognitive process will be relevant. However, communication is special. Speakers want to be understood and therefore tailor their utterances to their audience. Relevance theory claims that this raises a defeasible expectation that the utterance will be 'optimally relevant', i.e. that it is both relevant enough to be worth processing and as relevant as the speaker is willing and able to make it. (This is the communicative principle of relevance.) It further claims that this mandates the relevance-theoretic comprehension heuristic: a fast and frugal procedure dedicated to processing utterances.

Relevance theory claims that what a speaker communicates falls into two classes: explicatures, i.e. propositions which are developments of the logical form of the sentence uttered, and other propositions conveyed, which are implicatures. A further fundamental assumption of relevance theory is that linguistically encoded meaning radically underdetermines the content that a speaker intends to convey. Much research has focused on

investigating this linguistic underdetermination and on developing accounts of the interpretation of particular linguistic items and types of utterance. Specific areas of research include lexical pragmatics; figurative speech, including metaphor and irony; the interpretation of discourse connectives and linguistic items that have non-truth-conditional meaning; and of logical linguistic items such as *and*, *if... then*, and negation.

Turning briefly to the history of the field: relevance theory is grounded in the philosopher Paul Grice's work on meaning and conversation and the theoretical advances of the cognitive revolution in linguistics and psychology. It was initially developed by Dan Sperber and Deirdre Wilson in the late 1970s and 1980s, and has been one of the leading pragmatic theories since then. Sperber and Wilson both continue to be active in developing the theory. Other key contributors include Diane Blakemore, who introduced the notion of procedural meaning, and Robyn Carston, who is best known for her work on the semantics/pragmatics interface and linguistic underdeterminacy. Relevance theory has contributed considerably to the emerging fields of experimental and developmental pragmatics, and is in dialogue with philosophy of language.

General Overviews

Sperber and Wilson 1995 is the book (first published 1986) which originally presented relevance theory. While parts of the book are now primarily of historical interest because of subsequent development of the theory, most of it remains current. Sperber and Wilson 1987 is a very useful précis of the theory as it was then, followed by commentary from linguists, philosophers and psychologists, and a reply to the commentary by Sperber and Wilson.

There are a number of excellent introductory handbook and encyclopedia articles on relevance theory, including Wearing 2015, Wilson 2009, Wilson 2016, and Wilson and Sperber 2004. Carston and Powell 2006 and Clark 2011 are accessible discussions of twenty-first century developments. In addition, two handbook articles on pragmatics provide useful background. Recanati 1998 succinctly sets out the whole landscape from speech act theory and Grice's pioneering work to modern linguistic pragmatics. Sperber and Wilson 2005 is also an excellent introduction to pragmatics and is invaluable for students of relevance theory in showing how its founders view the field.

Carston, R. & Powell, G. (2006). Relevance theory: New directions and developments. In E. LePore & B. C. Smith (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of the Philosophy of Language* (pp. 341-360). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

A useful guide to developments that are still playing out, including lexical pragmatics and experimental pragmatics.

Clark, B. (2011). Recent developments in relevance theory. In D. Archer & P. Grundy (Eds.), *The Pragmatics Reader* (pp. 129-137). Oxford: Routledge.

A very accessible guide both to changes that Sperber and Wilson made in their 1995 Postface and to subsequent developments.

Recanati, F. (1998). Pragmatics. In *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (pp. 620-633). London: Routledge. doi: 10.4324/9780415249126-U028-1

An erudite introduction to pragmatics.

Sperber, D. & Wilson, D. (1987). *Précis of 'Relevance: Communication and Cognition[http://www.dan.sperber.fr/wp-content/uploads/1987_wilson_precis-of-relevance.pdf]*. *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, 10, 697-754.

A very useful short presentation of the original version of relevance theory, followed by brief peer commentary and a reply to the commentary by Sperber and Wilson.

Sperber, D. & Wilson, D. (1995). *Relevance: Communication and Cognition*. Oxford: Blackwell.

The first edition of this book (published in 1986) was the first systematic presentation of relevance theory. The text of the second edition is identical except for a few additional endnotes and an important retrospective 'Postface' which made changes to the theory, both terminological and substantive. The early chapters contain discussion of the Gricean background to relevance theory and the assumptions that relevance theory makes about cognition and communication. These are followed by discussion of how relevance theory can shed light

on various phenomena including metaphor and irony, speech acts and the interpretation of non-declarative sentences, and prosody and information structure.

Sperber, D., & Wilson, D. (2005). *Pragmatics[<https://www.dan.sperber.fr/?p=117>]*. In F. Jackson & M. Smith (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Contemporary Philosophy* (pp. 468-501). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

A magisterial overview of pragmatics by the two founders of relevance theory.

Wearing, C. J. (2015). Relevance theory: pragmatics and cognition. *WIREs Cognitive Science*, 6(2), 87-95. doi:10.1002/wcs.1331

Lucid introduction, written by a philosopher of language.

Wilson, D. (2009). Relevance theory. In L. Cummings (Ed.), *The Pragmatics Encyclopedia* (pp. 393-399). London: Routledge.

An excellent concise introduction to relevance theory. Perhaps the best place for students and the interested general reader to start.

Wilson, D. (2016). *Relevance theory[<http://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/1475755/1/Relevance%20Theory%202016.pdf>]*. In Y. Huang (Ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Pragmatics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

A clear overview which also discusses recent developments, including work on epistemic vigilance.

Wilson, D., & Sperber, D. (2004). *Relevance theory[<https://www.dan.sperber.fr/?p=93>]*. In L. R. Horn & G. L. Ward (Eds.), *The Handbook of Pragmatics* (pp. 607-632). Malden, Mass: Blackwell.

Sets out the main theoretical commitments of relevance theory and some of its applications.

Journals

Work in relevance theory appears in pragmatics journals including the *Journal of Pragmatics* and *Pragmatics and Cognition*, in general linguistics journals such as *Lingua*, and in *Mind and Language*, a journal which specializes in issues that concern both linguists and philosophers. *Language and Literature* has published a number of papers that apply relevance-theoretic pragmatics to literary texts. *UCL Working Papers in Linguistics* is a major source of work on relevance theory.

**Journal of Pragmatics*[<https://www.journals.elsevier.com/journal-of-pragmatics>]*

The leading journal dedicated to pragmatics. Has a strong slant towards sociological work but also publishes some papers on relevance theory and cognitive pragmatics.

**Language and Literature*[<https://journals.sagepub.com/home/lal>]*

A journal for work applying linguistics to literary texts. It has published a number of relevance-theoretic analyses as well as some critiques of the use of relevance theory in literary criticism.

**Lingua*[<https://www.sciencedirect.com/journal/lingua>]*

Until the end of 2016, *Lingua* was one of the most important journals for general linguistics, and it published many important relevance theory papers. Since an acrimonious change of editorial board in 2016 there have been no relevance-theoretic papers of note published there.

**Mind and Language*[<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/journal/14680017>]*

A journal for linguists and philosophers. Has published a number of key papers in relevance theory and related topics in philosophy.

**Pragmatics & Cognition*[<https://www.benjamins.com/catalog/pc>]*

An interdisciplinary journal. It has published several important relevance-theoretic papers.

**UCL Working Papers in Linguistics*[<https://www.ucl.ac.uk/pals/research/linguistics/linguistics-research/working-papers-linguistics>]*

The annual working papers for the linguistics department at University College London. Many important relevance theory papers have been made available here. Some, but by no means all, have subsequently been published elsewhere.

Reference Works

Two reference works are closely enough aligned to Gricean and post-Gricean pragmatics to be useful in work on relevance theory. Allott 2010 is a lexicon of pragmatics with extensive coverage of relevance-theoretic terminology as well as terms in the neighboring fields of Gricean pragmatics and speech act theory. A number of eminent relevance theorists are among the contributors to Cummings 2010, an encyclopedia of pragmatics.

Allott, N. (2010). *Key Terms in Pragmatics*. London: Continuum.

A lexicon of pragmatics, organized alphabetically. Has entries for almost all the important terminology for relevance theory.

Cummings, L. (Ed.). (2010). *The Pragmatics Encyclopedia*. Abingdon: Routledge.

An encyclopedia of pragmatics with good coverage of Gricean and post-Gricean pragmatics including relevance theory.

Textbooks

Two textbooks dedicated to relevance theory have been published: Blakemore 1992 and Clark 2013. Relevance theory also receives some coverage in a number of textbooks on linguistic meaning and pragmatics, the best of which are Chapman 2011 and Kroeger 2018. Carston 2002, listed under *Explicature*, a monograph on linguistic underdeterminacy and explicit meaning, would make an excellent textbook for a course for advanced students.

Blakemore, D. (1992). *Understanding Utterances*. Oxford: Blackwell.

A ground-breaking textbook written by a leading relevance theorist. Now somewhat out of date because of changes in the theory, but still a very useful resource for teachers and lecturers.

Chapman, S. (2011). *Pragmatics*. Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan.

Useful as an introduction to Gricean and post-Gricean pragmatics.

Clark, B. (2013). *Relevance Theory*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

<https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139034104>

An excellent textbook dedicated to relevance theory. Comprehensive coverage, in friendly, discursive text, with thought-provoking exercises.

Kroeger, P. (2019). **Analyzing Meaning : an Introduction to Semantics and Pragmatics*[<http://langsci-press.org/catalog/book/231>]*. (Second corrected and slightly revised ed.). Berlin: Language Science Press.

A good open-source introduction to semantics and pragmatics. Chapter 9, on pragmatics since Grice, would be useful in teaching the explicature/implicature distinction and semantic underdeterminacy.

Anthologies

Wilson and Sperber 2012 is one of the most important books on relevance theory, a collection of some of their key papers. There are also several important multi-authored collections of papers. Carston and Uchida 1998 is a wide-ranging collection containing a number of papers of enduring value. Soria and Romero 2010 is a collection of papers that comment on Robyn Carston's work, with a particular focus on the semantics/pragmatics interface. Scott, et al. 2019 is a thematically diverse collection with contributions from many of the leading figures in relevance theory.

Carston, R. & Uchida, S. (Eds.). (1998). *Relevance Theory: Applications and Implications*. Amsterdam: J. Benjamins.

A collection of papers presented at a conference in Japan in 1993, with several important contributions.

Scott, K., Clark, B., & Carston, R. (Eds.). (2019). *Relevance, Pragmatics, and Interpretation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108290593>

A collection with contributions from many leading relevance theorists.

Soria, B. & Romero, E. (Eds.). (2010). *Explicit Communication: Robyn Carston's Pragmatics*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

A collection with a focus on the semantics/pragmatics distinction, with important contributions from philosophers of language as well as relevance theorists.

Wilson, D. & Sperber, D. (2012). *Meaning and Relevance*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

<https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139028370>

A collection of papers by Wilson and Sperber.

Bibliography

The **Relevance Theory Online Bibliographic Service** is a website listing nearly every paper connected with relevance theory. It currently has around 5000 entries. There are two ways of displaying the references, one listing the papers alphabetically by author and the other a very useful thematic listing.

**Relevance Theory Online Bibliographic Service*[<https://personal.ua.es/francisco.yus/rt2.html>]*

An online bibliography maintained by Francisco Yus of the University of Alicante. Very comprehensive and frequently updated, with links to online versions of papers where they are available. The bibliography is also available broken down by **theme*[<https://personal.ua.es/francisco.yus/rt.html>]*

Developmental Work

Relevance theory has been influential in the huge growth of research on the acquisition/development of pragmatic abilities in recent decades. Grigoroglou and Papafragou 2017, a concise, recent handbook article, is an excellent short introduction to pragmatic development. Zufferey 2014 is a book-length introduction to the field. Happé 1993 is a ground-breaking paper testing the relevance-theoretic prediction that irony should require higher-order theory of mind. Papafragou 2002 is a discussion of how the emergence of mindreading abilities in children relates to their developing proficiency in utterance interpretation, and investigates the development of the ability to understand evidentials. Falkum, et al. 2017 is a recent study on the acquisition of metonymy.

Falkum, I. L., Recasens, M. & Clark, E. V. (2017). "The moustache sits down first": on the acquisition of metonymy. *Journal of Child Language*, 44(1), 87-119. doi:10.1017/S0305000915000720

Reports on a study that finds that children as young as three can both produce and understand metonyms in favorable circumstances. Includes useful short reviews of literature on the development of figurative language in general as well as metonymy.

Grigoroglou, M. & Papafragou, A. (2017). Acquisition of pragmatics. In R. Clark & M. Aronoff (Eds.), *Oxford Research Encyclopaedia of Linguistics*. Oxford University Press. DOI: 10.1093/acrefore/9780199384655.013.217

A sophisticated but clear introduction to pragmatic development, by researchers well acquainted with relevance theory.

Happé, F. (1993). Communicative competence and theory of mind in autism: A test of relevance theory. *Cognition*, 48(2), 101-119. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0010-0277\(93\)90026-R](https://doi.org/10.1016/0010-0277(93)90026-R)

A classic study which probes the role of theory of mind in comprehension of figurative speech in normally developing participants and participants with Autistic Spectrum Disorder.

Papafragou, A. (2002). **Mindreading and verbal communication*[<http://papafragou.psych.udel.edu/papers/mind.pdf>]*. *Mind & Language*, 17(1&2), 55-67.

A discussion of the role that theory of mind and its development play in utterance interpretation. Argues that infants are aware that others have mental states that can be affected by communication, and that mindreading is involved in the acquisition of evidentials

Zufferey, S. (2014). *Acquiring Pragmatics : Social and Cognitive Perspectives*. London: Routledge.

An introduction to the acquisition of pragmatic abilities, with some commentary on the contribution of relevance theory.

Experimental Work

Experimental pragmatics uses techniques from psychology to investigate how speaker-hearers produce and interpret utterances in context, focusing on pragmatic inference and non-literal readings. It is a relatively new field, having emerged from theoretical pragmatics and experimental psychology around 2000, but has grown tremendously and developed into a distinct area of linguistics. Relevance theory has been one of the greatest influences on the field, from early works such as Jorgensen, et al. 1984 – cited under *Irony* – and Nicolle and Clark 1999 to the first scholarly collection, Noveck and Sperber 2004, and ongoing work which is summarized in Breheny 2011, Noveck and Sperber 2007, and Noveck 2018. One of the key questions has been whether some pragmatic inferences are generated by default – the neo-Gricean view – or whether all of them are context-sensitive, as relevance theory predicts. Bott and Noveck 2004, one of the earliest studies to test this, finds results that support the relevance-theoretic view. This finding is now well supported, as discussed by Breheny 2011. There has also been a great deal of work on figurative speech, including metaphor (e.g. Rubio Fernández 2007), which has been shaped by the relevance-theoretic account of lexical modulation as the expression of an *ad hoc* concept, and irony (e.g. Spotorno and Noveck 2014), where much work has involved testing relevance theory's conception of irony as echoic use. Other predictions of relevance theory have been tested. Van der Henst, et al. 2002 is an experimental study of rounding in telling the time: e.g. reporting the time as 'half past nine' rather than 'nine twenty-seven'. It found that the extent to which participants round is predictable and manipulable if one assumes that they are aiming for relevance rather than strict truthfulness. See also *Developmental Pragmatics* and the separate Oxford Bibliographies article *Experimental Pragmatics[obo-9780199772810].*

Breheny, R. (2011). Experimentation-based pragmatics. In W. Bublitz & N. Norrick (Eds.), *Handbook of Pragmatics: Volume 1 Foundations of Pragmatics* (pp. 561–586). Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton.

A good overview of the field. Discusses several areas of research, as well as general theoretical and methodological questions.

Bott, L. & Noveck, I. A. (2004). Some utterances are underinformative: The onset and time course of scalar inferences. *Journal of Memory and Language*, 51(3), 437–457. doi:10.1016/j.jml.2004.05.006

An early study which finds that pragmatic inference is context-sensitive.

van der Henst, J.-B., Carles, L. & Sperber, D. (2002). *Truthfulness and relevance in telling the time[http://www.dan.sperber.fr/wp-content/uploads/2002_van-der-henst_carles_truthfulness-and-relevance-in-telling-the-time.pdf]*. *Mind and Language*, 17(5), 457–466.

An elegant study of rounding when reporting the time which shows that speakers aim for relevance rather than strict truthfulness.

Nicolle, S. & Clark, B. (1999). Experimental pragmatics and what is said: A response to Gibbs and Moise. *Cognition*, 69(3), 337-354. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0010-0277\(98\)00070-5](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0010-0277(98)00070-5)

Shows that, asked about what a speaker has said, in certain cases people report implicated content.

Noveck, I. A. (2018). *Experimental Pragmatics: the Making of a Cognitive Science*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781316027073>

An accessible but rigorous introduction to the field written by one of its pioneers and leading researchers. The introductory chapter is the best introduction to experimental pragmatics for undergraduates and the general reader, and individual chapters are the best introductions to experimental investigation of the topics that they cover, including reference, 'scalar implicatures', metaphor, irony, and other figurative speech.

Noveck, I. A. & Sperber, D. (Eds.). (2004). *Experimental Pragmatics*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

The first collection of papers on experimental pragmatics.

Noveck, I. A. & Sperber, D. (2007). *The why and how of experimental pragmatics: The case of ‘scalar inferences’ [http://www.dan.sperber.fr/wp-content/uploads/2007_noveck_the-why-and-how-of-experimental-pragmatics.pdf]* In N. Burton-Roberts (Ed.), *Pragmatics* (pp. 184-212). Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Both a kind of manifesto for experimental pragmatics and a discussion of how so-called ‘scalar implicatures’ – a focus of much research – may be neither scalar nor implicatures.

Rubio Fernández, P. (2007). Suppression in metaphor interpretation: Differences between meaning selection and meaning construction. *Journal of Semantics*, 24(4), 345-371. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jos/ffm006>

Investigates the role played by contextually relevant material in the formation of *ad hoc* concepts.

Spotorno, N. & Noveck, I. A. (2014). When is irony effortful? *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General*, 143(4), 1649-1665. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/a0036630>

Reports several interesting experiments on processing of ironic utterances. A key finding is that irony processing is facilitated by the availability in the verbal context of material that the irony echoes.

Explicature and the Explicit/Implicit Distinction

‘explicature’ is a technical term in relevance theory, defined in two ways: 1) explicatures are all the propositions that the speaker intends to communicate *except* for implicatures; 2) they are pragmatically implied/inferred developments of the linguistically encoded logical form of the linguistic material uttered. The notion is introduced in Sperber and Wilson 1986, p. 182, cited under *General Overviews*. A great deal of work in relevance theory has focused on the contribution of pragmatic inference to explicature. Carston 1988 is an important early discussion. Carston 2002, which is a monograph dedicated to the topic, is one of the most important relevance-theoretic publications. Carston 2004 is a useful handbook paper, and Carston and Hall 2012 is an excellent recent introduction. Borg 2016 is a recent critical paper which argues that the notion of explicature combines three distinct criteria that diverge in many cases, rendering the notion incoherent.

Borg, E. (2016). Exploding explicatures. *Mind & Language*, 31(3), 335-355. <https://doi.org/10.1111/mila.12109>
Borg, a philosopher of language, argues that the notion of explicature is incoherent.

Carston, R. (1988). Implicature, explicature and truth-theoretic semantics. In R. Kempson (Ed.), *Mental Representations: The Interface Between Language and Reality* (pp. 155-181). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Discusses the distinction between the proposition expressed by an utterance and implicatures, and the borderline between linguistic semantics and pragmatics.

Carston, R. (2002). *Thoughts and Utterances: The Pragmatics of Explicit Communication*. Oxford: Blackwell.

This book is a key contribution to relevance theory. As well as the explicature/implicature distinction, it deals with linguistic underdeterminacy, the pragmatics of *and* conjunction and the pragmatics of negation. Very thorough and clearly written.

Carston, R. (2004). Relevance theory and the saying/implicating Distinction. In L. R. Horn & G. L. Ward (Eds.), *The Handbook of Pragmatics* (pp. 633–656). Malden, Mass: Blackwell.

A handbook paper which explains the difference between the Gricean saying/implicating distinction and relevance theory’s distinction between explicatures and implicatures.

Carston, R. & Hall, A. (2012). Implicature and explicature. In H.-J. Schmid (Ed.), *Cognitive Pragmatics* (pp. 47-83). Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton.

Both an introduction to the explicature/implicature distinction and a guide to the state of the art.

Irony

Sperber and Wilson 1981 introduced the echoic account of verbal irony, which they refined as relevance theory developed, in chapter 4 of Sperber and Wilson 1995 (cited under *General Overviews*), and in Wilson and Sperber

1992. On this view, irony is the attribution by a speaker of a thought or utterance to someone or some group, where the speaker conveys a negative attitude to the content of the thought or utterance, and where neither the attitude nor the fact that the speaker is not giving her own opinion is overtly linguistically marked. The theory was tested experimentally in Jorgenson, et al. 1984, one of the first experimental studies on pragmatics. See also Happé 1993 under *Developmental Work* and Spotorno and Noveck 2014 under *Experimental Work*. The main rival to the echoic account is the view that verbal irony is a form of pretense, developed by Clark and Gerrig 1984, as a response to Jorgenson, et al. 1984. The two views have much in common, both disagreeing with the classical – and Gricean – definition of irony as conveying the opposite of the words one says, and both developing brief suggestions made in Grice 1989. Wilson 2006 compares the two theories, as well as some hybrid accounts, arguing that while pretense may accompany irony it is not a necessary condition for it. Wilson and Sperber 2012 is the best introduction to verbal irony. It gives a comparative overview of the different views, and makes original contributions, arguing that the echoic theory explains the essential role of attitude in irony, irony’s normative bias, and the existence of a distinct ironic tone of voice.

Clark, H. H. & Gerrig, R. (1984). *On the pretense theory of irony[https://web.stanford.edu/~clark/1980s/Clark,%20H.H.%20_%20Gerrig,%20R.J.%20_On%20the%20pretense%20theory%20of%20irony_%201984.pdf]*. *Journal of Experimental Psychology*, 113, 121–126.

Introduces the pretense theory of verbal irony, the main rival to the relevance-theoretic account.

Grice, P. (1989). Further notes on logic and conversation. In *Studies in the Way of Words* (pp. 41–57). Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press.

Here Grice considers various difficulties with his theory of conversation, including his account of irony as a blatant violation of a maxim of truthfulness. Touches on the ironical tone of voice and the essential role of attitude in irony.

Jorgensen, J., Miller, G. A. & Sperber, D. (1984). Test of the mention theory of irony. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General*, 113(1), 112–120. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0096-3445.113.1.112>

Very early experimental paper, testing Wilson and Sperber’s echoic theory of irony.

Sperber, D. & Wilson, D. (1981). *Irony and the use-mention distinction[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/239063288_Irony_and_the_use-mention_distinction]*. In P. Cole (Ed.), *Radical Pragmatics* (pp. 295–318). New York: Academic Press.

This paper, originally published in 1978 in French, presents Sperber and Wilson’s echoic theory of irony.

Wilson, D. (2006). *The pragmatics of verbal irony: Echo or pretence?[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/223333203_The_pragmatics_of_verbal_irony_Echo_or_pretence]* *Lingua*, 116(10), 1722–1743.

Compares the pretense account with relevance theory’s echoic account, arguing that they are empirically distinguishable, and that echoing a thought or utterance is essential to irony, while pretense, although it often accompanies irony, is not.

Wilson, D. & Sperber, D. (1992). On verbal irony. *Lingua*, 87(1/2), 53–76. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0024-3841\(92\)90025-E](https://doi.org/10.1016/0024-3841(92)90025-E)

This paper further develops the relevance theoretic account.

Wilson, D. & Sperber, D. (2012). *Explaining irony[http://www.dan.sperber.fr/wp-content/uploads/WilsonSperber_ExplainingIrony.pdf]*. In *Meaning and Relevance* (pp. 123–145). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

The best introduction to verbal irony. Sets out the difference between relevance theory’s echoic account of irony, traditional views, the pretense account and hybrid echoic-pretense accounts. It also argues that the echoic account explains irony’s normative bias and the existence of an ironical tone of voice.

Lexical Pragmatics and Lexical Semantics

Relevance theory's current account of lexical pragmatics emerged in the 1990s. Its basic tenets are that lexical words in use often express an occasion-specific sense (an *ad hoc* concept); and that use of a lexical word gives access to the information in its lexical entry but does not by default give rise to a literal interpretation of which the encoded meaning of the word is a constituent. Carston 1997, the earliest published statement of this theory, argues for a unified analysis of examples where the concept expressed is narrower than the standing meaning of the word and cases in which it is broader. Sperber and Wilson 1998 also sets out this account, and discusses the implication that there may be many more mentally represented concepts than linguistically encoded word senses. Wilson and Carston 2007 is the best synoptic statement of the view and sets out the related radical 'continuity hypothesis': that there is no qualitative difference in processing literal use, loose use, hyperbole or metaphor. See also *Metaphor*. Earlier accounts of loose use and metaphor in terms of descriptive resemblance were set out in chapter 4 of Sperber and Wilson 1995 (cited under *General Overviews*). A distinct but related issue is whether lexical words encode concepts. Sperber and Wilson's view is that in general they do. Sperber and Wilson 1997 mentions possible exceptions: some words including comparative adjectives like *tall* may encode pro-concepts: i.e. they have some conceptual content but it has to be supplemented for an utterance of a sentence to express a proposition. Works by other theorists, including Carston 2012 and Allott and Textor 2017, argue that lexical words do not encode concepts. Chapter 6 of Recanati 2004 sets out several possible positions in the debate. Falkum 2015 argues for a pragmatic, inferential account of polysemy.

Allott, N. & Textor, M. (2017). *Lexical modulation without concepts: Introducing the derivation proposal[[http://folk.uio.no/nicholea/papers/Allott_&_Textor_\(2017\)_Lexical_Modulation_postprint.pdf](http://folk.uio.no/nicholea/papers/Allott_&_Textor_(2017)_Lexical_Modulation_postprint.pdf)]*. *Dialectica*, 71(3), 399-424. doi:10.1111/1746-8361.12190

Argues that competence with a word is not knowledge of a concept that the word encodes, but is a grasp of linguistic features sufficient to participate in a social practice.

Carston, R. (1997). Enrichment and loosening: Complementary processes in deriving the proposition expressed. *Linguistische Berichte*, 8, 103–127. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-663-11116-0_7

Introduces the current relevance-theoretic view of lexical pragmatics, and argues in favor of a unitary account of broadening and narrowing.

Carston, R. (2012). *Word meaning and concept expressed[<https://www.kcl.ac.uk/artshums/depts/philosophy/research/wordmeaning/papers/conceptexpressed.pdf>]*. *The Linguistic Review*, 29(4), 607–623.

Argues that word meanings are non-conceptual, comparing a 'wrong format' view of word meaning with meaning eliminativism.

Falkum, I. L. (2015). *The how and why of polysemy: A pragmatic account[<https://www.duo.uio.no/bitstream/handle/10852/58928/Falkum-Lingua-2015-postprint.pdf?sequence=2&isAllowed=y>]*. *Lingua*, 157, 83-99.

Compares rule-based and pragmatic accounts of polysemy and argues for the latter.

Recanati, F. (2004). *Literal Meaning*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

A wide-ranging monograph, touching on the nature of inference, what is said, pragmatic processing, and linguistic semantics. In several places this book is in effect a debate with relevance theory.

Sperber, D. & Wilson, D. (1998). The mapping between the mental and the public lexicon. In P. Carruthers & J. Boucher (Eds.), *Language and Thought: Interdisciplinary Themes* (pp. 184-200). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

This paper is one of the earliest to put forward relevance theory's current view of lexical pragmatics. It argues that uses of words express *ad hoc* concepts – occasion-specific senses – and that there may be many mentally represented concepts that are not the encoded senses of words.

Wilson, D. & Carston, R. (2007). *A unitary approach to lexical pragmatics: Relevance, inference and *ad hoc* concepts[<https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/A-unitary-approach-to-lexical-pragmatics%3A-inference->

Wilson-Carston/265a8b2f106d213ad9332bbc8cc8e1c79d116f0b]*. In N. Burton-Roberts (Ed.), *Pragmatics* (pp. 230–259). Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

The best introduction to lexical pragmatics. It sets out exemplary data and discusses the current relevance-theoretic account, according to which literal use, narrowing, loose use and metaphor are different outcomes of a single process.

Literary Language

From early on, relevance theory has been concerned with literary as well as quotidian use of language, and has aimed to analyze figurative speech (see *Irony* and *Metaphor*) and ‘poetic effects’. A key concept is weak communication, set out at pp. 59–60, pp. 195–199 of Sperber and Wilson 1995 (cited under *General Overviews*). Pilkington 2000 is a book-length account of poetic effects. Sperber and Wilson 2008 (cited under *Metaphor*) is the best introduction to weak communication and poetic effects. Furlong 1995 argues that literary interpretation should be seen from the perspective of relevance theory as a form of communication among others. Clark 1995 provides a relevance-theoretic analysis of William Golding’s *The Inheritors*, contrasting it with both earlier analysis in the framework of literary stylistics and Fish’s non-linguistic analysis. Wilson 2011 explores consequences of the assumption that literary interpretation is not *sui generis*, and provides a useful evaluation of the so-called ‘intentional fallacy’ in the light of modern pragmatics. For those who are already acquainted with relevance theory, this is the best introduction to its application to literature. Clark 2014, an admirably clear and well-organized handbook paper, is the best introduction for the uninitiated. Two recent collections of papers are particularly useful. Chapman and Clark 2014 is the first collection dedicated to pragmatic literary stylistics, the use of relevance theory and other pragmatic theories to shed light on literary interpretation. Cave and Wilson 2018 is the first collection of papers by literary theorists working with relevance theory. Chesters 2018 is one of the papers in the volume, drawing on relevance theory’s account of lexical pragmatics in providing analyses of some of Emily Dickinson’s poems. Gutt 2014 applies relevance theory to translation. Fabb 2016 sets out a relevance-theoretic account of poetic closure.

Cave, T. & Wilson, D. (Eds.). (2018). *Reading Beyond the Code : Literature and Relevance Theory*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. DOI:10.1093/oso/9780198794776.001.0001

A collection of papers by literary scholars attempting to apply notions from relevance theory to the analysis of literary texts.

Chapman, S. & Clark, B. (Eds.). (2014). *Pragmatic Literary Stylistics*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan. <https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137023278>

A collection of papers exploring the emerging field of pragmatic literary stylistics, i.e. the application of linguistic pragmatics to literary texts. Some of the contributions are primarily relevance theoretic.

Chesters, T. (2018). The lingering of the literal in some poems of Emily Dickinson. In T. Cave & D. Wilson (Eds.), *Reading Beyond the Code: Literature and Relevance Theory* (pp. 149–163). Oxford: Oxford University Press. DOI: 10.1093/oso/9780198794776.001.0001

An interesting analysis by a literary scholar which draws on notions from relevance theory’s account of lexical pragmatics.

Clark, B. (2009). *Salient inferences: Pragmatics and *The Inheritors*[<http://eprints.mdx.ac.uk/1892/>]*. *Language and Literature*, 18(2), 173–212.

An analysis of Golding’s *The Inheritors*, demonstrating ways in which use of modern pragmatic theory can be an advance on both earlier stylistics and literary criticism that is not informed by linguistics.

Clark, B. (2014). Stylistics and relevance theory. In M. Burke (Ed.), *The Routledge Handbook of Stylistics* (pp. 155–174). London: Routledge.

A very clear introduction to ways that pragmatic theory and particularly relevance theory can contribute to work on literature.

Fabb, N. (2016). *Processing effort and poetic closure[<https://doi.org/10.15462/ijll.v5i4.78>]*. *International Journal of Literary Linguistics*, 5(4).

Provides a relevance-theoretic account of poetic closure as an effect due to increased processing effort induced by formal changes near the end of a poem.

Furlong, A. (1995). **Relevance theory and literary interpretation*[<http://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/1349785/>]*. PhD thesis, University College London, London.

An early attempt to show how relevance-theoretic pragmatics can contribute to understanding of literary texts and their interpretation.

Gutt, E.-A. (2014). *Translation and Relevance : Cognition and Context* (2nd ed.). Abingdon: Routledge.

This monograph, originally published in 1991, argues that there is no theory of translation distinct from a theory of inferential communication, and shows how relevance theory can shed light on various features of translation.

Pilkington, A. (2000). *Poetic Effects : A Relevance Theory Perspective*. Amsterdam: J. Benjamins.

A monograph on poetic effects and literary interpretation, comparing a relevance-theoretic account with views from literary criticism, and applying it to a number of literary texts.

Wilson, D. (2011). *Relevance and the interpretation of literary works[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/264397664_Relevance_and_the_interpretation_of_literary_works]*. *UCL Working Papers in Linguistics*, 23, 69-80.

For those who already know something about relevance theory, this is the best introduction to the use of relevance theory in work on literature. Discusses the extent to which post-Gricean intentional pragmatics is in conflict with the widespread rejection within literary theory of any privileged role for authorial intentions.

The Pragmatics of *and*

Utterances of sentences conjoined with *and* can convey several different relations between the states of affairs the sentences describe, including “and then” and “and as a result” as well as truth-functional logical conjunction. There has been a great deal of debate about whether *and* is lexically ambiguous between these senses or whether the interpretations are generated pragmatically from an underlying univocal meaning, which is the relevance-theoretic position. Two key papers pre-date relevance theory. Grice 1989, which was originally given as a lecture in 1967, argued for a univocal logical semantics for *and*, and an implicature account of non-logical senses. Cohen 1971 argued against the implicature account on the basis of intuitions suggesting that the different senses of *and* embed under logical operators. Carston 1988 (cited under *Explicature*) and Carston 1993 are key works in the development of the relevance-theoretic view of *and*, namely that it is unambiguous and that it contributes to pragmatically inferred explicit meaning (thus explaining the facts Cohen reports). Chapter 3 of Carston 2002, listed under *Explicature*, is a very thorough summary of the discussion and presents arguments for the relevance-theoretic view. Blakemore and Carston 2005 extends the account to uses of *and* that had received little attention, where it plays a role in presenting the structure of an argument or expresses surprise.

Blakemore, D. & Carston, R. (2005). The pragmatics of sentential coordination with *and*. *Lingua*, 115(4), 569–589. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lingua.2003.09.016>

Extends the univocal semantics for *and* to two types of example that have largely been neglected in the debate: i) argumentative uses of *and*; ii) uses of *and* that express an attitude of surprise or disquiet.

Carston, R. (1993). Conjunction, explanation and relevance. *Lingua*, 90, 27–48. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0024-3841\(93\)90059-6](https://doi.org/10.1016/0024-3841(93)90059-6)

Discusses a wide range of uses of *and*, and argues for a pragmatic account.

Cohen, L. J. (1971). Some remarks on Grice’s views about the logical particles of natural language. In Y. Bar-Hillel (Ed.), *Pragmatics of Natural Languages* (pp. 50-68). New York: Humanities Press.

One of the earliest commentaries on Grice's work on conversation, this paper argues that the different senses of *and* are not implicatures, since they embed under logical operators. This test has been very influential. The paper also proposes a univocal over-determined linguistic semantics for *and*.

Grice, P. (1989). Logic and conversation. In *Studies in the Way of Words* (pp. 22–40). Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press.

This chapter, which started life as a lecture in 1967, is a founding text of modern pragmatics, introducing the notion of implicature and Grice's Cooperative Principle and maxims of conversation. It begins by arguing that the linguistic semantics of certain natural language words including *and* is identical to their respective equivalents in first-order logic, and that apparent ambiguities are in fact pragmatically inferred aspects of speaker meaning.

Metaphor, Hyperbole, and Idioms

The current relevance-theoretic account of metaphor is most clearly set out in Sperber and Wilson 2008. Their view is 'deflationary', as the title of the paper notes: they claim that metaphorical interpretations are generated by the standard process for interpreting uses of words, and that in this sense metaphor is merely one end of a continuum from literal use through loose use and hyperbole. This view of lexical pragmatics emerged in Carston 1997 and Wilson and Sperber 1998 (cited under *Lexical Pragmatics and Lexical Semantics*). One commitment of this account is that metaphors contribute to the proposition expressed; they are not cases where the speaker says one thing and implicates another. Bezuidenhout 2001 and Wearing 2006 also argue for a 'direct expression' view of metaphor. Camp 2006 argues against it. There was an earlier relevance-theoretic account of metaphor. This is set out in chapter 4 of Sperber and Wilson 1995 (cited under *General Overviews*). Wilson and Carston 2006 discusses an apparent problem for the current model. Metaphors like *John is a bulldozer* seem to attribute properties to the metaphor topic (here John) that do not belong to the metaphor vehicle (here the category of literal bulldozers): e.g. relentlessness. The authors argue that the relevance-theoretic model has the resources to account for such 'emergent' properties. Vega Moreno 2007 is a monograph which sets out the relevance-theoretic account of metaphor and extends the coverage to idioms. Carston 2010 discusses the role of imagery and deliberate processing in the interpretation of metaphors, and a phenomenon the author calls the 'lingering of the literal' where the literal meaning is available even after the metaphorical reading has been arrived at. She argues that there are two routes of interpretation for metaphors, one unconscious, the other reflective. Wilson 2011 compares relevance theory's account of metaphor with the influential domain-mapping view. Carston and Wearing 2015 argues against the continuity hypothesis. On the authors' view hyperbole is qualitatively distinct from metaphor, involving an evaluative component.

Bezuidenhout, A. (2001). *Metaphor and what is said: a defense of a direct expression view of metaphor[<https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/3ea6/5b9f4baff8c15fe273075729b9904eca5294.pdf>]*. In P. A. French & H. K. Wettstein (Eds.), *Figurative Language* (pp. 156-186). Oxford: Blackwell.

Argues that metaphors enter into what is said, and that metaphorical utterances are not cases where a speaker literally says one thing and implicates another.

Camp, E. (2006). Contextualism, metaphor, and what is said. *Mind & Language*, 21(3), 280-309. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-0017.2006.00279.x>

Defends the Gricean view of metaphorical utterances, on which the speaker says one thing in order to mean another.

Carston, R. (2010). XIII-Metaphor: *Ad hoc* concepts, literal meaning and mental images. *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society (Hardback)*, 110(3pt3), 295-321. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9264.2010.00288.x>

Discusses literary and extended metaphors and the phenomenon of the 'lingering of the literal' and proposes that there are two different interpretation processes for metaphor that are different in kind: a fast, unconscious one and a slower, more reflective one.

Carston, R. & Wearing, C. (2015). Hyperbolic language and its relation to metaphor and irony. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 79, 79-92.

Compares hyperbole with metaphor and irony, argues that it is qualitatively different from both, and suggests that a range of pragmatic processes can be involved in its interpretation.

Sperber, D. & Wilson, D. (2008). *A deflationary account of metaphors. In R. W. Gibbs (Ed.), *The Cambridge Handbook of Metaphor and Thought* (pp. 84-108). New York: Cambridge University Press.
<https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139028370>

Argues that metaphor is not a distinct natural kind, since a single inferential process is responsible for literal, loose, hyperbolic and metaphorical interpretations. Also important for its discussion of poetic effects arising from both literal and figurative uses of language.

Vega Moreno, R. E. (2007). *Creativity and Convention: The Pragmatics of Everyday Figurative Speech*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

A monograph on metaphor and idioms in the relevance-theoretic framework.

Wearing, C. (2006). Metaphor and what is said. *Mind & Language*, 21(3), 310-332. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-0017.2006.00280.x>

Argues that metaphorical and literal speech are continuous with each other in that both typically involve interpretive flexibility, and that metaphor contributes to what is said.

Wilson, D. (2011). *Parallels and differences in the treatment of metaphor in relevance theory and cognitive linguistics[<https://filg.uj.edu.pl/documents/41616/8969068/12814-Wilson.pdf>]*. *Intercultural Pragmatics*, 8(2), 177-196. doi:10.1515/iprg.2011.009

Compares the relevance-theoretic account of metaphor with the popular domain-mapping view, notes that cross-domain mappings are neither sufficient nor necessary for metaphorical interpretations, and suggests that such mappings can arise from repeated metaphorical use.

Wilson, D. & Carston, R. (2006). Metaphor, relevance and the 'emergent property' issue. *Mind & Language*, 21(3), 404-433. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-0017.2006.00284.x>

Discusses the phenomenon of 'emergent properties' in metaphor interpretation, and proposes an inferential, relevance-theoretic account.

Metarepresentation

The notion of metarepresentation – representation of a representation – features in more than one way in work in relevance theory. First, relevance theory assumes that to have a mental state such as a belief or intention is to have a mental representation, and further claims that utterance interpretation is a species of mindreading, in which the speaker and the hearer metarepresent each other's mental states. See Sperber and Wilson 2002 and Wilson 2005 cited under *Modularity* and Papafragou 2002 in *Developmental Work*. Secondly, the relevance-theoretic notion of interpretive use is, independently of the above, metarepresentational. It follows that relevance theory's accounts, as varieties of interpretative use, of *Irony* and use of interrogative sentences – for which see *Speech Acts* – are metarepresentational. Noh 2000 looks at metarepresentation in phenomena that include echo-questions, quotation and metalinguistic negation. For metalinguistic negation, see also chapter 4, section 4 of Carston 2002 – listed under *Explicature*. Allott 2017 is a general introduction to metarepresentation in pragmatics, briefly explaining all of these topics.

Allott, N. (2017).

Metarepresentation[[http://folk.uio.no/nicholea/papers/Allott_\(2017\)_Metarepresentation_postprint.pdf](http://folk.uio.no/nicholea/papers/Allott_(2017)_Metarepresentation_postprint.pdf)]. In A. Barron, G. Yueguo, & G. Steen (Eds.), *Handbook of Pragmatics* (pp. 295-309). Abingdon: Routledge.

A brief introduction to the roles that metarepresentation plays in language use and utterance interpretation.

Noh, E.-J. (2000). *Metarepresentation: A Relevance-Theory Approach*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

A monograph on metarepresentation, with analysis of quotation, echo questions, metalinguistic negation, and metarepresentational uses in conditionals.

Modularity

In early relevance-theoretic work Sperber and Wilson saw utterance interpretation as non-modular since it is an inferential process which could in principle draw on any information available to the hearer. On the other hand they argued that the speed of pragmatic inference and the fact that utterances are in general helpful stimuli, intended to be understood, suggested that it was misguided to assume close parallels with some types of general reasoning including belief fixation in science. On this view, utterance interpretation is subserved by a quick but imperfect heuristic. For these views see Sperber and Wilson 1995 cited under *General Overviews* and Sperber and Wilson 1996. Carston 1997 both provides a useful summary and explains a subsequent change in the view, influenced by work on massive modularity in psychology. According to this work, a module is a functionally specialized (or domain specific) mental system which exploits regularities in its domain, and much or all of cognition is to be understood in terms of the interactions of such systems. Another important development was the discovery of dedicated theory of mind (or 'mindreading') abilities, which allow the imputation of beliefs, desires, intentions and the like to other people on the basis of their observable behavior. Given that utterance interpretation involves attributing intentions to the speaker on the basis of an action, three views were therefore available: that pragmatic inference is non-modular, that it is carried out by a general theory-of-mind module, or that there is a module dedicated to utterance interpretation. Sperber and Wilson 2002 and Wilson 2005 argue for the last of these possibilities, claiming that the utterance interpretation module is a sub-module of the theory-of-mind module. This has become the standard view in relevance theory.

Carston, R. (1997). *Relevance-theoretic pragmatics and modularity[<https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/bb0e/85a95e20112fc10c569ce3b874f0b87a0753.pdf>]*. *UCL Working Papers in Linguistics*, 9, 29–53.

Provides a useful précis of the early view that utterance interpretation is non-modular and a snapshot of the change then in process to the current model.

Sperber, D. & Wilson, D. (1996). *Fodor's frame problem and relevance theory (reply to Chiappe & Kukla)[http://www.dan.sperber.fr/wp-content/uploads/1996_wilson_fodor-s-frame-problem-and-relevance-theory.pdf]*. *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, 19(3), 530–532.

This paper argues, against the philosopher Jerry Fodor, that it is not irrational to attend to less than all potentially relevant information and that thought processes have to aim for a good balance of cognitive effects extracted for effort expended in processing an input.

Sperber, D. & Wilson, D. (2002). Pragmatics, modularity and mind-reading. *Mind & Language*, 17(1&2), 3–23. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-0017.00186>

Compares two views and argues for the second: i) that pragmatic inference is carried out by applying a general mindreading module to communicative actions; ii) that there is a dedicated module for utterance interpretation.

Wilson, D. (2005). New directions for research on pragmatics and modularity. *Lingua*, 115(8), 1129–1146. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lingua.2004.02.005>

Argues that both mindreading and utterance interpretation are subserved by dedicated modules.

Mutual Knowledge and Mutual Manifestness

Coordination between speakers and hearers relies, in general, on contextual information and 'general knowledge' accessible to both. An interesting question is what relation speakers and hearers have to have to this information. A strong view is that it must be mutually known, i.e. not only known to both speaker and hearer, but also the speaker must know that the hearer knows it, and the hearer must know that the speaker knows that the hearer knows it and so on *ad infinitum*. This is often assumed, particularly in formal pragmatics, but has been criticised as psychologically unrealistic. The relevance-theoretic position is that the key is mutual manifestness, where a proposition is manifest to a person to the degree that it can be entertained by her as true or probably true. The debate between the two positions flourished in the 1980s but has received less attention in recent years. Smith 1982 is an important collection of papers on the topic, including Sperber and Wilson 1982, an early statement of their views. The relevance-theoretic position is set out in pp. 15–21, 38–46, 60–64, 151–171 of Sperber and Wilson

1995 and pp. 698, 699–701, 737–739 of Sperber and Wilson 1987 – both cited under *General Overviews* – and some of the peer commentary published with Sperber and Wilson 1987 is also relevant. Garnham and Perner 1990 is a brief critical examination of Sperber and Wilson’s view, to which Sperber and Wilson 1990 is a reply defending their views.

Garnham, A. & Perner, J. (1990). Does manifestness solve problems of mutuality? *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, 13(01), 178-179. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0140525X00078225>
Brief critical commentary on Sperber and Wilson’s arguments against positing mutual knowledge in accounts of verbal communication.

Smith, N. V. (Ed.). (1982). *Mutual Knowledge*. London: Academic Press.
An important volume of collected papers from a conference on the topic of mutual knowledge.

Sperber, D. & Wilson, D. (1982). *Mutual knowledge and relevance in theories of comprehension[http://www.dan.sperber.fr/wp-content/uploads/1982_wilson_mutual-knowledge-and-relevance.pdf]*. In N. V. Smith (Ed.), *Mutual Knowledge* (pp. 61-85). London: Academic Press.
An early discussion of the topic.

Sperber, D. & Wilson, D. (1990). Reply to Garnham and Perner. *Behavioral & Brain Sciences*, 13(1), 183-184. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0140525X00078237>
A brief defense of the relevance-theoretic view that mutual knowledge is not necessary for verbal communication.

Politeness and Phatic Communication

There have been a number of attempts to address in relevance-theoretic terms phenomena that might be considered to lie within the province of sociopragmatics. Jary 1998a is a refutation of claims that relevance theory has nothing to say in this area. It also develops an account of the politeness of imperative sentences. Escandell-Vidal 1996 argues that a cognitive approach to politeness offers a way out of the impasse between rival accounts of politeness phenomena as culture-specific or grounded in universal rationality. Escandell-Vidal 1998 and Jary 1998b set out (distinct) relevance-theoretic accounts of linguistic politeness. Žegarac and Clark 1999 develops a relevance-theoretic account of phatic communication.

Escandell-Vidal, V. (1996). Towards a cognitive approach to politeness. *Language Sciences*, 18(3), 629-650. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0388-0001\(96\)00039-3](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0388-0001(96)00039-3)
Proposes that a cognitive account of verbal politeness can solve the apparent impasse between a universal rationality model and a purely culture-specific model.

Escandell Vidal, V. (1998). Politeness: a relevant issue for relevance theory. *Revista Alicantina de Estudios Ingleses*, 11, 45-57.
Develops a relevance-theoretical account of verbal politeness, arguing for the importance of distinguishing between overt and covert intentional and non-intentional transmission of information.

Jary, M. (1998a). Is relevance theory asocial? *Revista Alicantina de Estudios Ingleses*, 11, 157-170.
Shows that relevance theory is capable of accounting for socio-pragmatic phenomena.

Jary, M. (1998b). Relevance theory and the communication of politeness. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 30(1), 1–19. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0378-2166\(98\)80005-2](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0378-2166(98)80005-2)
Sets out an account of verbal politeness in relevance-theoretic terms and argues that it is superior to extant norm-based accounts.

Žegarac, V. & Clark, B. (1999). Phatic interpretations and phatic communication. *Journal of Linguistics*, 35, 321–346. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4176528>.

Provides a relevance-theoretic account of phatic communication (or phatic ‘communion’), arguing that it is at base interpretations rather than utterances that are phatic (or otherwise).

Prosody

There have been a few attempts to provide a relevance-theoretic account of prosody’s contribution to communication. Focal stress and information structure are discussed at pp. 202–217 of Sperber and Wilson 1995 (cited under *General Overviews*). Wilson and Wharton 2006 is a wide-ranging attempt to integrate work on prosody into a relevance-theoretic framework. Clark 2012 attempts to provide a relevance-theoretic account of phrasal intonation, in particular the nuclear tones of Standard Southern British.

Clark, B. (2012). The relevance of tones: Prosodic meanings in utterance interpretation and in relevance theory. *The Linguistic Review*, 29(4), 643–661. <https://doi.org/10.1515/tlr-2012-0024>

Proposes a relevance-theoretic account of the nuclear tones of Standard Southern British in terms of minimal encoded meanings, enriched by pragmatic interpretation.

Wilson, D. & Wharton, T. (2006). Relevance and prosody. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 38(10), 1559-1579. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2005.04.012>

This is the best introduction to work on prosody within relevance theory, with extensive references. It argues for the relevance of two distinctions: between natural signs and natural and non-natural signals, and between accidental and intentional transmission of information.

Procedural and Non-Truth-Conditional Meaning

The notion of procedural meaning was introduced by Blakemore 1987 with the aim of accounting for the difference between the meanings of ‘conceptual’ words like *cat*, *green*, and *jump* and ‘procedural’ discourse markers like *so* and *after all*, where the former typically contribute to truth-conditions while the latter do not. The difference was to be understood as a matter of whether words contribute their content to explicatures (conceptual) or constrain the search for an interpretation (procedural). For example, *so* may encode an instruction to look for an interpretation on which the clause it introduces describes a consequence or conclusion. Sperber and Wilson 1993 argues that there are two separate distinctions here: i) what a word encodes i.e. what is systematically activated by its use: a concept or a procedure; ii) whether or not a particular use of a word contributes to the truth-conditions of the utterance. On their account, while pronouns encode procedures – e.g. ‘Find a singular female referent’ – they typically contribute to truth-conditional content. Equally, some words that encode concepts, e.g. *frankly*, contribute to truth-conditions when modifying the main verb in a clause (*I told her frankly*), but not when used as utterance adverbials (*Frankly, I don’t care*). Within this framework there has been work on several types of linguistic item. Blakemore 2002 and Iten 2005 discuss discourse markers, Hedley 2007 is a thesis on pronouns, Blakemore 2011 concerns expressives and Scott 2013 deals with demonstratives. Wharton 2009 is a monograph on non-verbal communication. Escandell-Vidal, et al. 2011 is a collection of papers on procedural meaning. Wilson 2016 is an invaluable overview and reassessment of all this work.

Blakemore, D. (1987). *Semantic Constraints on Relevance*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Introduced the notion of procedural meaning.

Blakemore, D. (2002). *Relevance and Linguistic Meaning: The Semantics and Pragmatics of Discourse Markers*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511486456>

A monograph on procedural meaning, non-truth-conditional meaning and discourse markers.

Blakemore, D. (2011). On the descriptive ineffability of expressive meaning. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 43(14), 3537-3550. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2011.08.003>

Argues that expressives such as *damn* have procedural meaning, and that this accounts for descriptive ineffability, i.e. the difficulty of paraphrasing them.

Escandell-Vidal, V., Leonetti, M., & Ahern, A. (Eds.). (2011). *Procedural Meaning: Problems and Perspectives*. Bingley: Emerald.

A collection of papers on procedural meaning.

Hedley, P. (2007). Anaphora, relevance and the conceptual/procedural distinction. DPhil thesis, Oxford University. The most sustained discussion of pronouns in relevance-theoretic terms.

Iten, C. (2005). *Linguistic Meaning, Truth Conditions and Relevance: The Case of Concessives*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Both an examination of the lexical semantics of concessives such as *although* and *even if*, and a sustained discussion of the role of truth in utterance interpretation.

Scott, K. (2013). *This and that: A procedural analysis*. *Lingua*, 131, 49-65.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lingua.2013.03.008>

Argues that demonstratives encode procedural rather than conceptual meaning and that this both constrains reference resolution and in certain cases affects implicatures.

Wharton, T. (2009). *Pragmatics and Non-Verbal Communication*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

<https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511635649>

A wide-ranging and readable monograph on non-verbal communication and varieties of meaning. The second chapter is one of the best introductions to Grice's distinction between natural and non-natural meaning.

Wilson, D. (2016). Reassessing the conceptual-procedural distinction. *Lingua*, 175-176, 5-19.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lingua.2015.12.005>

Provides an overview and assessment of three decades of work, including a comparison between relevance theory's procedural/conceptual distinction and Kaplan's distinction between semantics of meaning and semantics of use. The best introduction to work on procedural meaning.

Wilson, D. & Sperber, D. (1993). Linguistic form and relevance* [http://www.dan.sperber.fr/wp-content/uploads/1993_wilson_linguistic-form-and-relevance.pdf]*. *Lingua*, 90(1), 1-25.

A key paper, which argues that conceptual/procedural and truth-conditional/non-truth-conditional are separate distinctions.

Reasoning and Epistemic Vigilance

There have been contributions from relevance theorists to the psychology of reasoning since the 1990s. Sperber et al. 1995 offers and successfully tests a relevance-theoretic account of Wason's famous selection task, an experiment in which participants reason about a conditional statement. Girotto et al 2001 extends coverage to a variant, the deontic selection task. Van der Henst, et al. 2002 finds that considerations of relevance govern what participants say when presented with a relational problem, such as *A is greater than B; C is greater than A: what follows?* Sperber et al 2010 claims that humans are equipped with a set of abilities that monitor and evaluate inputs to cognition from communication, setting the agenda for a great deal of subsequent work on 'epistemic vigilance'. Matsui et al 2016 is an experimental study of the development of epistemic vigilance in children. Mazzarella et al 2018, another experimental study, investigates the impact on assessments of a speaker of whether a falsehood is implicated, stated or presupposed.

Girotto, V., Kimmelmeyer, M., Sperber, D. & van der Henst, J. B. (2001). *Inept reasoners or pragmatic virtuosos? Relevance and the deontic selection task [<http://www.dan.sperber.fr/wp-content/uploads/2009/09/deontic.pdf>]*. *Cognition* 5, 81(2), B69-76

Reports experiments that show that participants can be induced to pass or fail both the standard and the deontic versions of the selection task, according to manipulations of the task as predicted by relevance theory.

van der Henst, J.-B., Politzer, G. & Sperber, D. (2002). *When is a conclusion worth deriving? A relevance-based analysis of indeterminate relational problems [https://jeannicod.ccsd.cnrs.fr/ijn_00000099/document]*. *Thinking & Reasoning*, 8(1), 1-20.

Shows that relevance theory successfully predicts what participants will say when asked what follows from a relational problem, including cases where they say that nothing follows.

Matsui, T., Yamamoto, T., Miura, Y. & McCagg, P. (2016). Young children's early sensitivity to linguistic indications of speaker certainty in their selective word learning. *Lingua*, 175-176, 83-96. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lingua.2015.10.007>

An elegant investigation of the development of epistemic vigilance abilities, showing that there are separate components with distinct developmental pathways.

Mazzarella, D., Reinecke, R., Noveck, I. & Mercier, H. (2018). Saying, presupposing and implicating: How pragmatics modulates commitment. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 133, 15-27. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2018.05.009>

Investigates the cost to a speaker's reputation of communicating a false proposition, finding that false implicatures are less costly than false presuppositions or false assertions.

Sperber, D., Cara, F. & Girotto, V. (1995). *Relevance theory explains the selection task[http://www.dan.sperber.fr/wp-content/uploads/1995_cara_girotto_relevance-theory-explains-the-selection-task.pdf]*. *Cognition*, 57(1), 31-95.

Shows that relevance theory can explain the failure of participants on Wason's selection task, a famous experiment in the psychology of reasoning, and that it correctly predicts that certain manipulations will lead most participants to success.

Sperber, D., Clément, F., Heintz, C., Mascaro, O., Mercier, H., Origgi, G. & Wilson, D. (2010). *Epistemic vigilance[http://www.dan.sperber.fr/wp-content/uploads/2010_clement-et-al_epistemic-vigilance.pdf]*. *Mind & Language*, 25(4), 359-393.

A theoretical paper, arguing that epistemic vigilance is an important phenomenon, and that it is carried out by a suite of cognitive mechanisms.

Relevance Theory and the Gricean Background

The work of the philosopher Paul Grice on meaning and on pragmatic inference is foundational to relevance theory's account of communication. Grice 1957 analyzes speaker meaning as a property of actions that are accompanied by certain audience-directed intentions. In his William James lectures of 1967, collected as Grice 1989, Grice drew attention to the role of speaker implicature and hearer inference in communication, introduced the term 'implicature', and proposed his famous Cooperative Principle and Maxims. Relevance theory is Gricean in that it views utterance interpretation as inference about speaker intentions, guided by rational and contextual expectations. However it aims to provide a psychologically accurate theory of how utterance interpretation proceeds, unlike Grice, who offered a rational reconstruction. These similarities and differences are set out in Sperber and Wilson 1995(cited under *General Overviews*). Many other differences are motivated by improved empirical coverage. Wilson and Sperber 1981 and parts of Sperber and Wilson 1995 (cited under *General Overviews*), note problems and lacunae in Grice's work, making proposals for an explicit cognitive account of communication. One sharp distinction between relevance theory on the one hand and Grice's work and other pragmatic frameworks inspired by it on the other is that there is no role in relevance theory for maxims of conversation. Wilson and Sperber 2002 argues, against Grice and other philosophers of language, that there is no norm of strict and literal truthfulness in speech. Carston 1995 critically examines neo-Gricean attempts to develop a maxim-based but cognitively tractable account of implicature, arguing that the relevance-theoretic account is preferable on grounds of generality and empirical coverage.

Carston, R. (1995). Quantity maxims and generalised implicature. *Lingua*, 96(4), 213-244.

Compares relevance theory with neo-Gricean pragmatics. Argues against Levinson's claims that there are categorically distinct generalised implicatures, that they are generated by default rules, and that there are maxims that clash. Available *online[[https://doi.org/10.1016/0024-3841\(95\)00016-5](https://doi.org/10.1016/0024-3841(95)00016-5)]* by subscription.

Grice, P. (1957). Meaning. *The Philosophical Review*, 66, 377-388. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/2182440>

This paper proposes a distinction between natural and non-natural meaning, and an analysis of the latter in terms of certain intentions of the speaker.

Grice, P. (1989). *Logic and conversation: William James lectures*. In *Studies in the Way of Words* (pp. 1-143). Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press.

In these chapters, which were given as a series of lectures in 1967, Grice introduces the notion of implicature, sets out his theory of talk exchanges, discusses a number of problems and possible refinements, and discusses speaker meaning and linguistic meaning.

Wilson, D. & Sperber, D. (1981). *On Grice's theory of conversation[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/259476430_On_Grice%27s_theory_of_conversation]*. In P. Werth (Ed.), *Conversation and Discourse: Structure and Interpretation* (pp. 155–178). London: Croom Helm.

Argues that Grice's general program is on the right lines, but that pragmatic inference is required to retrieve the proposition expressed as well as implicatures, that Grice's maxims cannot on their own account for metaphor and irony, and that the maxims should be replaced by one principle of relevance. This was an important step in the development of relevance theory, and the criticisms of Grice remain cogent.

Wilson, D. & Sperber, D. (2002). *Truthfulness and relevance[http://www.dan.sperber.fr/wp-content/uploads/2002_wilson_truthfulness-and-relevance.pdf]*. *Mind*, 111(443), 583–632.

Argues against the view, held by many philosophers of language, that what is said by a speaker of an utterance is governed by a norm, convention or maxim of truthfulness. Wilson and Sperber criticise David Lewis as well as Grice, and they propose an alternative: that literal, loose and figurative use alike are governed by expectations of relevance.

Speech Acts

Relevance theory has made two key claims about speech acts and illocutionary force. Sperber and Wilson 1995 (cited under *General Overviews*) – argues on pp. 243–246 that a number of types of speech acts identified by mainstream speech act theory fall outside of a theory of communication: some, such as warning, because they do not need to be identified by the hearer to have been successfully performed; others, including promising and betting, because they are the province of sociology, not pragmatics. The second contribution is work on the semantics and pragmatics of non-declarative sentences, starting with Sperber and Wilson 1995, pp. 249–254 – under *General Overviews* – and set out in detail in Wilson and Sperber 1988, which postulates that imperatives represent a state of affairs as desirable, and interrogatives represent thoughts as desirable. Clark 1991 is a thesis on this topic. Ifantidou 2001 is a monograph on evidentials, with extended discussion of speech-act theory.

Clark, B. (1991). *Relevance theory and the semantics of non-declaratives[<http://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/1317886/1/296058.pdf>]*. PhD thesis, University of London, London.

This thesis extends Sperber and Wilson's account of non-declaratives to some constructions related to imperatives, interrogatives and exclamatives, and contrasts it with rival accounts.

Ifantidou, E. (2001). *Evidentials and Relevance*. Amsterdam: J. Benjamins.

This monograph discusses and provides relevance-theoretic accounts of linguistically encoded and purely pragmatic evidentials.

Wilson, D. & Sperber, D. (1988). *Mood and the analysis of non-declarative sentences[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/239065831_Mood_and_the_analysis_of_non-declarative_sentences]*. In J. Dancy, J. M. E. Moravcsik, & C. C. W. Taylor (Eds.), *Human Agency: Language, Duty, and Value; Philosophical Essays in Honor of J. O. Urmson* (pp. 77-101). Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press.

A key paper, which sets out a relevance-theoretic account of the meanings of imperative and interrogative sentences.