

## MODERN PRAGMATICS: GRICE AND RELEVANCE THEORY

**Eva Delgado Lavín**  
**Begoña Vicente Cruz**

*Departamento de Filología Inglesa*  
*Universidad del País Vasco/Euskal Herriko Unibertsitatea*

### INTRODUCTION

Most recent books in pragmatics start by dissociating themselves from the view of communication that M. Reddy (1979) described as ‘the conduit metaphor’, and which has been mainly –although not exclusively– practised by semiotic approaches to language. Reddy (1979:286) noticed that ordinary talk about communication, “sounds like mental telepathy or clairvoyance, and suggests that communication transfers thought processes somehow bodily”, by a process of packaging thoughts into words at one end –encoding the message into a signal– and unpackaging the thought at the receiving end –decoding; but for disruptions in the channelling of information, communication thus viewed succeeds by achieving a duplicity of thoughts between communicator and addressee; our expectations of being understood rely on our knowledge that we share a set of conventions –a code. This is, simplified, how the *code model* describes human linguistic communication. H.P. Grice’s article “Meaning” (1957) marks a major shift of interest to the inferential aspects in the process of exchanging information: communication is possible as long as there is some way of recognising the intentions of the communicator, that is, without conventions or codes, no matter how much use these might be. It was not just that the context, as well as the content, had to be taken into account; his point was much more subtle: the whole process of communication rests on this type of recognition. Later, in his William James Lectures (1967), Grice articulated a pragmatic theory around the distinction between meaning and interpretation at a time when the main philosophical interest was conflating the two notions as indistinguishable.<sup>1</sup> Let’s take a closer look at the issues at stake.

## INTENTION AND COMMUNICATION

According to Grice, for an individual to mean something by means of a certain stimulus (not necessarily a linguistic utterance) is to act with the intention of producing a certain effect/response in an audience by means of the recognition of this intention. No use of conventional resources is therefore necessary for communication to succeed, as when somebody shows her arm in plaster when asked how her skiing holiday went: the communicator succeeds in communicating that it was a flop or that she had an agitated and painful holiday (produces the effect of making the audience believe this) by means of raising her arm. A raised arm in plaster does not conventionally mean this; it is partly the speaker's action intending the audience to believe this that does the trick.<sup>2</sup> In their book *Relevance: Communication and Cognition* (henceforth S&W), Sperber and Wilson elaborate on Grice's notion of intention, and define ostensive-inferential –wholly overt– communication, thus excluding other forms of information transmission. For this task Grice's formulation, they claim, lets in some cases of covert communication while also proving too restrictive: I may fail to produce the intended effect, say, the belief that the holiday was a flop, even if you recognise my intention. For this reason they describe communicative behaviour as involving the production of a stimulus<sup>3</sup> with the intention a) to inform the audience of something, i.e., an informative intention, and b) to inform the audience of one's informative intention. This last second-order *informative intention* they call a *communicative intention*. Suppose that A, who has a key of B's flat, wants to inform B that she has been in B's flat while he was away (informative intention). She may choose to do this covertly, by producing direct evidence of what she wants B to be informed of, say, by leaving her umbrella on the dinner table, or she can, some days later, when B is back, pick up the phone and tell him "I've been to your flat while you've been away." This time she has not produced direct evidence that she has been in his flat (informative intention), but she has produced direct evidence of her intention that he should be informed of that (communicative intention). Although the evidence she is producing is weaker than in the previous case, provided B trusts A, she is thus securing the satisfaction of her informative intention without the risks that covert communication involves: B may not notice the umbrella, or think that it was there before he left, etc. Only this characterisation can make the right predictions about human verbal communication.

## GRICE'S THEORY OF CONVERSATION

In 1967 Grice gave a series of lectures at Harvard (his William James Lectures) on "Logic and conversation",<sup>4</sup> which are standardly taken as a theory of verbal communication, and as such has proved enormously influential in both philosophy and linguistics. We shall be concentrating on the paper of the same title published in 1975.<sup>5</sup>

In examining what is conveyed by an utterance in context, Grice introduced a now well known distinction between saying and implicating. This is how he (1975:44) characterised *what is said* by someone who has uttered the sentence *He is in the grip of a vice*:

In the sense in which I am using the word *say*, I intend what someone has said to be closely related to the conventional meaning of the words (the sentence) he has uttered (...) But for a full identification of what the speaker had said, one would need to know (a) the identity of x [the referent of “He”], (b) the time of utterance, and (c) the meaning, on the particular occasion of utterance, of the phrase *in the grip of a vice*.

The notion of *what is implicated* covers additional information recovered in the interpretation of an utterance and derived in an inferential process by combining what is said with certain assumptions of rationality and cooperation that he claimed governed our verbal exchanges. For this sort of additional information conveyed by an utterance Grice coined the term *conversational implicature (C.I.)*. He also distinguished a class of implications which seem to sit uncomfortably between what is said and the implicatures of the utterance. This is the class he called *conventional implicature*, where the implicature is determined by the linguistic meaning of the words used.<sup>6</sup> It is C.I.s, his main innovation, that are central to his theory and here is how he describes, on a first approximation, those ‘general features of discourse’ that affect their derivation:

Our talk exchanges do not normally consist of a succession of disconnected remarks, and would not be rational if they did. They are characteristically, to some degree at least, cooperative efforts; and each participant recognizes in them, to some extent, a common purpose or set of purposes, or at least a mutually accepted direction. (...) at each stage, SOME possible conversational moves would be excluded as conversationally unsuitable. We might then formulate a general principle which participants will be expected (*ceteris paribus*) to observe, namely: 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. One might label this the COOPERATIVE PRINCIPLE.<sup>7</sup>

He then distinguishes four more specific maxims and submaxims, ‘the following of which will, in general, yield results in accordance with the cooperative principle’ (CP): *quantity*, relating to the amount of information to be provided and enjoining speakers to give neither more nor less information than is required; *quality*, whereby speakers are required to tell the truth; *relation*, which requires of speakers that they be relevant; *manner*, relating not to what is said, but to how: speakers must avoid obscurity, ambiguity, they must be brief and orderly. Grice saw this formulation as generalisable to all forms of rational and purposive behaviour, not just to talk exchanges.

Now, how do implicatures arise in conversation? How is it possible for a communicator to mean something over and above –even something different from– the literal meaning of her words? There are basically two ways this can happen: either a) no maxim is violated, the speaker is clearly sticking to the conversational norms, or b) the speaker is *exploiting* the maxims, i.e., patently contravening the norms: “...a procedure by which a maxim is flouted for the purpose of getting in a conversational implicature by means of something of the nature of a figure of speech.”<sup>8</sup> (1) below would be an example of (a), with its implicature –obtained via the maxim of relation–stated in (2),

1. A: Smith doesn't seem to have a girlfriend these days.  
B: He has been paying a lot of visits to New York lately.
2. Smith has, or may have, a girlfriend in New York.

And (3) is an example of (b)

3. A: You are the cream in my coffee.

In (3), A has produced a patently false statement, therefore flouting the first maxim of quality. Here,

...the most likely supposition is that the speaker is attributing to his audience some feature or features in respect of which the audience resembles (more or less fancifully) the mentioned substance.<sup>9</sup>

All C.I.s, whether arising from the observance of the CP and the maxims or their exploitation, must be *calculable*, i.e., capable of being worked out in an inferential process which Grice spells out this way:

A general pattern for the working out of a conversational implicature might be given as follows: 'He has said that *p*; there is no reason to suppose that he is not observing the maxims, or at least the CP; he could not be doing this unless he thought that *q*; he knows (and knows that I know that he knows) that I can see that the supposition that he thinks that *q* IS required; he has done nothing to stop me thinking that *q*; he intends me to think, or is at least willing to allow me to think, that *q*; and so he has implicated that *q*.<sup>10</sup>

The hearer will do this relying on the data he obtains from

(1) the conventional meaning of the words used, together with the identity of any references that may be involved; (2) the CP and its maxims; (3) the context, linguistic or otherwise, of the utterance; (4) other items of background knowledge; and (5) the fact, (or supposed fact) that all relevant items falling under the previous headings are available to both participants and both participants know or assume this to be the case.<sup>11</sup>

So the overall Gricean picture (1978:113) is as follows:

...for a large class of utterances, the total signification of an utterance may be regarded as divisible in two different ways: First, one may distinguish, within the total signification, between what is said (in a favored sense) and what is implicated; and second, one may distinguish between what is part of the conventional force (or meaning) of the utterance and what is not. This yields three possible elements –what is said, what is conventionally implicated, and what is non-conventionally implicated– though in a given case one or more of these elements may be lacking.

This division of labour came to greatly simplify the semantics of the language, and in particular, made it possible to equate natural language connectives with their logical counterparts by explaining their differences in terms of implicature, an issue that had been worrying analysts for a long time. Grice's work has been seen as laying the foundations for a theory of pragmatics which could no longer be deemed the 'pragmatic wastebasket' since it offered a starting point for the systematic separation of linguistic (coded) and non-linguistic aspects of utterance interpretation, subject to the operation of general principles governing human behaviour.

However, Grice's theory of conversation is not without problems. His system as a whole is loose as it stands. Grice (1975:46-7) himself acknowledges that one might need more maxims, that some maxims are more important than others (e.g. the first maxim of quality seems to be essential compared with the submaxim "Be brief") and that there are "all sorts of other maxims (aesthetic, social or moral in character)."<sup>12</sup> Some implicatures are calculated on the basis of what is said, others on the basis of how it is said. While most C.I.s are conveyed *in addition* to what is said, those involved in the interpretation of figurative utterances actually cancel what is said. A look at the kind of argument by which implicatures are derived (see pp. 151-2 above) will raise the following questions: are there any premises or conclusions in it? How is the implicature (q) itself recovered?<sup>13</sup> The most typical kind of C.I., the particularised ones, depend for their existence on particular features of the context, while the generalised kind depend on the particular context for their absence.<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, some implicatures (the conventional ones) are not even calculated but decoded.<sup>15</sup> As for the maxims, how are we to take "as informative as is required" or "relevance"? How is brevity to be measured?<sup>16</sup> The maxims seem to overlap in the generation of implicatures.<sup>17</sup> In certain cases, they do not seem to make the right predictions.<sup>18</sup> The ultimate problem with the maxims may be that no psychological rationale lies behind them.<sup>19</sup>

## RELEVANCE THEORY

Grice's seminal work spread rapidly, with many linguists and philosophers adhering to it and contributing with modifications that did not always improve on his insights in any obvious way. We find Sperber & Wilson's relevance theory approach (RT) the most solid and elaborate reformulation, one that incorporates the strength of Grice's insights and greatly improves on its problematic areas. Sperber & Wilson's theory, while greatly indebted to the American, has crucial points of departure and marks an important and very elaborate development in the theory of pragmatics, one that sets the study of pragmatics on a purely cognitive tack.

Their theory of communication follows from a general observation about human cognition: it is aimed at improving the individual's knowledge of the world, and is therefore geared towards information that seems relevant to him and to the maximisation of its cognitive impact. The main thesis in Sperber & Wilson's book, is that an act of ostension, such as the production of an utterance, by the mere fact that it claims the audience's attention, carries with it a presumption of optimal relevance, i.e., that the utterance is relevant enough to be worth the audience's attention. This fact they call the *principle of relevance* (PR), whereby utterances are

automatically taken as conveying an adequate range of *contextual* effects for no unnecessary effort. The notion of *contextual effects* captures the three ways in which new information can interact with old information, namely, by strengthening previously held assumptions, by contradicting them and leading to their elimination, or by yielding new assumptions which do not follow from the existing ones on their own or the new information alone. The PR is an exceptionless generalization that plays a key role in comprehension. It is not that S&W's programme reduces Grice's maxims to just one: the PR is not a maxim, or a norm; it does not have to be known by speakers and hearers because it is not social, it is cognitive, and it does not make sense to say that it has been violated, in contrast with the maxims: even if speakers do not want to create such an expectation of relevance, they cannot help creating one every time they speak.<sup>20</sup> Within their characterisation a *context* is defined as a psychological construct, a set of assumptions that the individual is expected to entertain and that is *not fixed before the interpretation of the utterance*, in marked contrast with other pragmatic approaches that see the context as external to the individual and given prior to the processing of the new information. Sperber and Wilson's theory differs from Grice's both at the explanatory and the descriptive level: the PR follows from a hypothesis about cognition; Grice's CP and maxims have a social character, although as he himself acknowledges (1975:47-49), their origin is unknown. On the descriptive level, while the presumption of relevance is automatically communicated by a speaker (truly or falsely), the maxims can be violated and therefore the presumptions they carry will not be entertained. Besides, the CP and the maxims are inferred –rather than communicated– and seem to act as premises in the inferential derivation of implicatures.

Because the presumption of relevance is one of adequate effects for no unnecessary effort, only one interpretation will be consistent with the PR. Hearers do not go on indefinitely interpreting utterances in their search for effects: the process of interpretation is halted at the first interpretation consistent with the PR, that is the only interpretation a rational communicator might have expected the hearer to derive, and it is her responsibility to facilitate its recovery on pain of not being understood. The problem with (1) in Grice's picture above is that other interpretations are possible, but the CP and the maxims do not articulate mechanisms to filter them out. Why would (2) be implicated by (1) and not (4), (5), or any other?:

- (1) A: Smith doesn't seem to have a girlfriend these days.  
B: He has been paying a lot of visits to New York lately.
- (2) A: Smith has, or may have, a girlfriend in New York.
- (4) Smith is too busy in New York and does not have time for flirting.
- (5) Smith is going back to his wife in New York.

The key is to be found in the fact that those interpretations are not equally accessible/retrievable in a given context, and therefore the processing effort required to select/construct them will not be the same, with the result that they will not be equally relevant.<sup>21</sup>

The assumptions that will serve as context are derived from memory, observation (the environment), the preceding discourse and inference, and for their selection, the proposition expressed by the utterance plays a crucial role by making available to the audience information stored under the conceptual addresses<sup>22</sup> of the words it contains.

An important point of departure from the Gricean account concerns the derivation of C.I.s requiring several items of information to be *mutually known* by the communicator and her audience: the conventional meaning of the words used, what the intended referents and senses are, the context, background knowledge, the CP and the maxims, as well as the purpose or accepted direction of the exchange. Although there is a whole host of authors who would agree with Grice, S&W believe that the notion of mutual knowledge does not play any part in comprehension, first, because it requires an infinity of intentions being checked,<sup>23</sup> and second, because it does not serve the purpose it was invoked for: even if it existed, we would still be left with the problem of accounting for how the intended referent, reading or implicature are recovered, given that at any one time speaker and hearer will allegedly have mutual knowledge of a good many candidates for them. This is not to deny that some form of shared knowledge does play an important – crucial, in fact – role in utterance interpretation. The communicator does have to anticipate the thought processes of the audience. S&W talk instead of *mutual cognitive environment*, a set of facts that are manifest (perceptible or inferrable) to an individual and for which it is manifest which people share it. You and I are in the same room in the same house and a bell rings: this fact is perceptible to you and to me, and each one of us can infer that it was perceptible to the other. Notice that even in this extreme case there is no absolute guarantee that we will derive the same representation of the same event (you may think the ringing is coming from the front door, whereas I represent it as coming from the back door, or I may even represent it as the phone). Mutual knowledge could only be guaranteed if we had access to each other's representations, an obvious impossibility.<sup>24</sup> This is one of the main factors that make communication such a risky business, one where there is never an absolute guarantee of success.

Concerning non-literal speech, Grice dealt briefly with metaphor, irony, meiosis (understatement) and hyperbole, in terms of C.I. arising from the flouting of the maxim of quality. He thus established a practice of studying these matters within pragmatics. The main quarrel S&W have with Grice's approach to non-literal use has to do with his linking the derivation of implicatures of this kind to the violation –in this case deliberate– of pragmatic principles or maxims (see (3) above). For the speaker of (3) the assumptions of rationality and cooperation cannot be maintained: a speaker who says something that she does not mean and means something she does not say can hardly be said to be rational and cooperating with her audience.

In this respect there are two important innovations in the relevance theory framework:

a) There is no such thing as a maxim of truthfulness in linguistic communication. When speakers do not speak literally –that is, most of the time– they are, as ever, using their utterance on the presumption that it is the most economical way of conveying what they want to convey.<sup>25</sup>

b) Any utterance involves, at least, two levels of representation: (i) “It interpretively represents a thought of the speaker’s, which itself descriptively represents some state of affairs.”<sup>26</sup> Literal and non-literal communication differ on the level of resemblance that the propositional form bears to the speaker’s thought, with this resemblance measured in terms of the logical and contextual implications that they share: all the implications in the case of literal speech, less than that in every other case (metaphor, hyperbole, metonymy, synecdoche, and less famously, loose uses and rough approximations). (ii) “An utterance interpretively represents some further representation.”<sup>27</sup> The thought being expressed by the utterance will be treated as expressing a thought of the speaker’s or as being attributed to someone else (*attributive use*). Along this dimension we find free indirect speech and irony:

We are arguing on the one hand that metaphors and ironies are not essentially different from other types of utterances but that, on the other hand, they are not essentially similar to one another. Metaphor plays on the relationship between the propositional form of an utterance and that of the speaker’s thought, irony plays on the relationship between the speaker’s thought and a thought it interprets. This suggests that the classical notion of a trope, which covers metaphor and irony and distinguishes both from “nonfigurative” utterances, should be abandoned altogether: It groups together phenomena which are not closely related and fails to group together phenomena which are.<sup>28</sup>

Besides, one of the clear advantages of their account is that it can explain the different illocutionary forces of utterances along the same lines, without postulating any extra theoretical machinery.<sup>29</sup>

One of the major contributions of Relevance Theory has been the emphasis put on the importance of pragmatic processes and hence the widening of the scope of pragmatic theory in the analysis of verbal communication. Along with this, important notions have been sharpened up and clarified. The traditional grouping together of *semantics*, *what is said* and *what is explicit*, on the one hand, as distinct from *pragmatics*, *what is implicated* and *what is implicit*, on the other has been shown to be inadequate. In particular, the new relevance-theoretic notion of *explicature* (which includes the *proposition expressed* by the utterance and the so-called *higher-level explicatures*) has opened up new promising perspectives for the analysis of non-truth-conditional elements of linguistically encoded meaning.

Notice that when Grice explains the working of his maxims, it is always in the discussion of implicatures. Some pragmatic processing has been allowed at the level of what is said since what is said must be truth-evaluable, it must be fully propositional. Now relevance theorists claim that there is a vast amount of pragmatic processing before reaching the propositional level, and that restricting the share of pragmatics at this level to disambiguation and reference assignment, as Grice and others have done, leads to a distorting account of what goes on in utterance interpretation. Pragmatic principles, or rather the pragmatic principle of relevance plays a big role in the determination of what is said (or propositional content of the utterance). According to RT, there are two phases in the process of interpreting an utterance: a modular phase of *decoding*, which gives us an *incomplete logical form*, a conceptual representation with gaps which must be filled by inference; and an inferential phase, carried out by the central thought processes, which makes the



logical form of the utterance into a *fully propositional form*, which is truth evaluable. Not only do we assign reference and resolve ambiguities at this stage. There is a whole variety of processes which are collectively termed *enrichments* of the logical form encoded by the utterance, some of which can be illustrated by the following exchange (from Carston 1988:155):

- (6) A: How is Jane feeling after her first year at university?  
 B: She didn't get enough units and can't continue.

Let us suppose, with Carston, "that (part at least) of A's interpretation of B's utterance is: '*Jane didn't pass enough university course units to qualify for admission to second year study, and, as a result, Jane cannot continue with university study. Jane is not feeling at all happy about this.*'"<sup>30</sup> The assumption in RT regarding the underlined bits is that the assignment of reference to "she", the disambiguation of "get" and "units," the narrowing of vague terms (i.e. "enough" for what?), the relation between the states of affairs described by the conjuncts,<sup>31</sup> the recovery of ellipsed material and semantic completion, all make a contribution at the propositional level.<sup>32</sup> These contextual enrichments would count as explicitly communicated by the utterance, where what is explicit is the result of the development of the logical form encoded by the utterance.<sup>33</sup> The assumption in italics is implicitly communicated, not because it is inferred—since a great amount of what is explicitly communicated has to be inferred, as we have just seen— but because it is not part of the development of the logical form encoded by the utterance. Relevance theorists then make a distinction between *implicatures* as non-explicitly communicated assumptions, and explicatures, which are explicitly communicated assumptions. The relevance theory notion of *explicature* starts from the Gricean notion of saying but goes far beyond it, since it accommodates various types of propositions communicated by utterances which cannot be classified either as part of what is said or what is implicated in the Gricean system. Let us look at the notion of explicature more closely. According to Wilson and Sperber (1990:98), an utterance typically has several explicatures. For example, in a given context Mary's utterance in (2) "might have those in (3):

- (2) a. *Peter*: Can you help?  
 b. *Mary* (sadly): I can't help.
- (3) a. Mary can't help Peter to find a job.  
 b. Mary says she can't help Peter to find a job.  
 c. Mary believes she can't help Peter to find a job.  
 d. Mary regrets that she can't help Peter to find a job.

The explicatures of an utterance are constructed by enriching a linguistically encoded logical form to the point where it expresses a determinate proposition, such as (3a), and optionally embedding it under a higher-level description: for example, a speech-act description such as (3b), or a propositional attitude description such as (3c) or (3d). Let us call (3a) the proposition expressed by the utterance and (3b-d) its higher-level explicatures."

Higher-level explicatures may be true or false in their own right, and hence play an important role in the modification of the set of assumptions entertained by the hearer.<sup>34</sup> But they do not contribute to the truth conditions of the proposition expressed by the utterance. The usefulness of this notion lies in that it accommodates naturally a variety of non-truth-conditional aspects of meaning (e.g. speech act and propositional attitude information), and opens up a new perspective in non-truth conditional semantics.

## CONCLUSION

It has been our aim in this paper to provide a sketchy summary of one of the most promising recent developments in pragmatics, the theory of relevance. We have chosen to do this by correlating the new work with that of H.P. Grice, the founding father of modern pragmatics. Although by no means exhaustive, we hope to have given the flavour of the main areas of agreement and dispute.

## Notes

1. Cf. D. Wilson (1992).
2. It will not do to claim, as some have done, that in the case of linguistic utterances what is recognised is their conventional meaning, for that on its own is far from guaranteeing success: the hearer will have to recognise inferentially that it is the conventional meaning of the utterance that the speaker intended. As for the claim that the intentions of the speaker are not enough to secure understanding, we could reply by showing that neither is convention, but whereas communication can take place in the absence of conventions on purely inferential grounds, human communication is never purely coded communication. Besides, the sorts of speaker's intentions we are interested in for the description of linguistic communication are tied to expectations of their own satisfaction, and therefore to rationality, and are not to be equated with speaker's fancies.
3. "Any modification of the physical environment designed to be perceived." S&W:29.
4. Only recently and posthumously published in their complete version: *Studies in the Way of Words*, Harvard University Press 1989.
5. Grice's work was far more wide ranging, though. See Grandy & Warner (1986).
6. For example, according to Grice (1961) (reference from D. Wilson 1992), the word "but" makes the same truth-conditional contribution as "and" to the sentence in which it occurs, but due to its lexical meaning, it also makes a non-truth-conditional contribution: it gives rise to a conventional implicature that there is some contrast between the states of affairs described. See D. Blakemore (1987) for a relevance-theoretic analysis of "but".
7. Cf. Grice (1975:45).
8. Cf. Grice (1975:52). A participant in a talk exchange may fail to fulfill a maxim in a variety of ways, which include the following: violating a maxim, opting out from the operation of a maxim and the CP, being faced by a clash of maxims, flouting a maxim. (Grice 1975:49).
9. Cf. *Op. cit.*, p.50.
10. Cf. *Op. cit.*, p. 50.
11. Cf. *Op. cit.*, p. 50.

12. For interesting criticisms of this point, see Sadock (1978).
13. These are some questions in Wilson and Sperber (1986:47-8).
14. The exchange in (1-2) on page 152 above is a typical Gricean example for a particularised conversational implicature. Generalised conversational implicatures are derived almost automatically. A sentence like “Some of the students arrived late” will give rise to the generalised implicature that “Not all of the students arrived late”, unless it is blocked implicitly by the context or else explicitly, as in “Some of the students arrived late; in fact, all of them did”. This is one of the Gricean distinctions Sperber & Wilson (1987:748) do not consider necessary: “the methods by which generalized and particularized implicatures are created must be the same, and the same theory must account for both”. However, some people working in the Gricean tradition are trying to develop a theory of generalised implicatures. Levinson (1987), for instance, has devised a system of principles, heuristics and default logical rules to account for their generation. For a description of this system, criticism and a defence of the relevance theory view, see Carston (1990).
15. Cf. footnote 6 above.
16. And does the submaxim make the right predictions? “I have no siblings” is shorter in terms of linguistic units than “I have no brothers or sisters” but it is the shorter sentence that will give rise to an implicature. Cf. Wilson and Sperber (1981).
17. About the second maxim of quantity, Grice (1975:46) says that “its effect will be secured by a later maxim, which concerns relevance.”
18. Where a patient, lacking adequate evidence, says “I’m ill” to her doctor, the Gricean system would predict the violation of the second maxim of quality (“Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence”) and the arising of a conversational implicature. According to Wilson and Sperber (1981:172), what is important is that this remark is relevant (in their sense –see the section on relevance theory below): “the fact that the speaker was not competent to pronounce on whether he was ill or otherwise would have little effect on the implications of the utterance.”
19. For detailed criticism of the Gricean maxims, see Wilson and Sperber (1981).
20. Cf. Wilson and Sperber (1988:140).
21. According to RT, a variety of factors affect processing effort, among which can be found complexity, frequency and recency. This notion of processing effort can explain what is going on in the examples in footnote 16 above.
22. See S&W:85-93. 23. See Schiffer’s characterisation (1972), and Clark & Marshall’s (1981).
24. Cf. D. Blakemore (1992:20). Moreover, it is simply false that a piece of information has to be mutually known for an utterance to be correctly interpreted by a hearer: A & B are taking a look at the cinema listings and A suggests seeing “The unbearable lightness of being”. B then replies:  
B: I hated the novel.  
It so happens that A did not know that “The unbearable lightness of being” was the title of a novel, and could therefore not know that it had been made into a film with the same title. B, for her part, does not stop to check if A knows these things. Of all the possible novels A and B might share knowledge of, how does A locate the intended referent? How does the notion of mutual knowledge help here?
25. RT can explain how the extra processing incurred in indirectness pays off by the recovery of additional contextual effects, but what is the justification for being indirect in Grice’s framework?
26. Cf. Sperber & Wilson 1987:707.
27. Bis.
28. Cf. Sperber & Wilson (1987:709). For a fuller treatment of non-literal speech see S&W: 231-243.
29. See S&W:243-254.
30. Underlining and italics are ours.

31. According to Carston (1988), the temporal and causal implications of and-utterances, along with other sorts of implications arising from them, can be treated as pragmatically determined aspects of the proposition expressed.
32. The criterion in relevance theory is not a philosophical one of minimum truth-evaluability but a cognitively more adequate one of relevant truth evaluability. The sentence "It will take some time to repair your watch" does not just express the truism that repairing the watch will involve any amount of time at the propositional level. Similarly, there is a difference at this level between what is expressed by the present perfect in "I have had breakfast" and in "I have been to Tibet" (examples from S&W:189).
33. The notion of explicitness is both classificatory and comparative. "A communicated assumption is either an implicature or an explicature, but an explicature is explicit to a greater or lesser degree" (Sperber & Wilson 1986:182). (The greater the element of decoding, the more explicit).
34. If Peter says to Mary "Diane Blakemore's latest book has already been published", the proposition expressed by the utterance may already belong to the set of assumptions held by Mary as true, and it will be the fact that Peter has said so that is relevant. An utterance may achieve its relevance through a higher-level explicature, as in the example, where the proposition expressed will be embedded in a speech-act description of the sort "Peter has said that."

## References

- Carston, R. (1988) «Implicature, Explicature and Truth-Theoretic Semantics», in Kempson, R. M., ed., *Mental Representations: The Interface Between Language and Reality*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 155-181.
- Carston, R. (1990) «Quantity Maxims and Generalised Implicature», *UCL Working Papers in Linguistics*, 1-31.
- Blakemore, D. (1987) *Semantic Constraints on Relevance*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Blakemore, D. (1992) *Interpreting Utterances*, Oxford: Blackwell.
- Clark, H. & C. Marshall, (1981) «Definite Reference and Mutual Knowledge», in Joshi, A., B. Webber, & I. Sag, eds., *Elements of Discourse Understanding*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Grandy, R. & R. Warner, eds., (1986) *Philosophical Grounds of Rationality: Intentions, Categories, Ends*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Grice, H. P. (1957) «Meaning», *Philosophical Review* LXVI, 377-88.
- Grice, H. P. (1961) «The Causal Theory of Perception», *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, Supplementary Volume 35.
- Grice, H. P. (1975) «Logic and Conversation», in COLE, P. & J. MORGAN, eds., *Syntax and Semantics 3: Speech Acts*, New York: Academic Press, 41-58.
- Grice, H. P. (1978) «Further Notes on Logic and Conversation», in COLE, P., ed., *Syntax and Semantics 9: Pragmatics*, New York: Academic Press, 113-28.
- Grice, H. P. (1989) *Studies in the Way of Words*, Harvard: Harvard University Press.
- Levinson, S. (1987) «Minimization and Conversational Inference», in Verschueren, J. & M. Bertucelli-Papy, eds., *The Pragmatic Perspective*, Amsterdam, John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Reddy, M. (1979) «The Conduit Metaphor -A Case of Frame Conflict in Our Language About Language», in ORTONY, A., ed., *Metaphor and Thought*, New York: Academic Press.

- Sadock, J.M. (1978) «On Testing for Conversational Implicature», in COLE, P., ed., *Syntax and Semantics Vol. 9: Pragmatics*, New York: Academic Press.
- Schiffer, S. (1972) *Meaning*, Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Sperber, D., & D. Wilson (1986) *Relevance: Communication and Cognition*, Oxford, Blackwell.
- Sperber, D., & D. Wilson (1987) «Précis of Relevance: Communication and Cognition», *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 10, 697-754.
- Wilson, D. (1990) «Pragmatics and time», Paper delivered to the M.I.T. *Conference on Time in Language*, March 1990.
- Wilson, D. (1992) «Pragmatic Theory Lecture Notes». (Unpublished)
- Wilson, D. (1992) «Non Truth-Conditional Semantics Lecture Notes». (Unpublished)
- Wilson, D., & D. Sperber (1981) «On Grice's Theory of Conversation», in P. Werth, ed., *Conversation and Discourse*, London: Croom Helm.
- Wilson, D., & D. Sperber (1986) «Inference and Implicature», in Travis, C., ed., *Meaning and Interpretation*, Oxford: Blackwell.
- Wilson, D., & D. Sperber (1986/7) «An Outline of Relevance Theory», *Notes on Linguistics* 39, July 1987, 5-24.
- Wilson, D., & D. Sperber (1988) «Representation and Relevance», in Kempson, R. M., ed., *Mental Representations: The Interface Between Language and Reality*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 133-53.
- Wilson, D., & D. Sperber (1990) «Linguistic Form and Relevance», *UCL Working Papers in Linguistics*, 95-112.