On Irony and Pragmatics

Xose Rosales Sequeiros

University of St Mark & St John, UK

Abstract

This article examines the interpretation of irony. It first looks at traditional approaches such as the Gricean model, where irony is analysed as an overt violation of the maxim of quality. This violation forces the hearer to search for a related proposition in order to save the application of the maxim, which in the case of irony is the opposite of what has been said. However, there are many counterexamples to this approach, which suggest that an alternative analysis is needed. It is argued that the best alternative approach is provided by relevance theory, which relies on the idea that irony is a form of echoic use involving an implicit dissociative attitude.

1. Introduction

This article explores the interpretation of irony, which traditional approaches such as the Gricean model analyse alongside other tropes like metaphor, hyperbole, or understatement. On the Gricean approach, irony is seen as involving an overt violation of the maxim of quality (where the speaker says something that is blatantly false). On this view, the hearer is then forced to look for a related proposition that will restore the application of the maxim. In the case of irony, the related proposition is the opposite of what was said, which is derived as an implicature of the utterance.

However, there are a number of problems with this traditional account. One of the main issues is that it seems to rely on arbitrary conventions, rather than explanatory principles. It also seems to treat irony mainly as a decorative device, rather than a communicative phenomenon involving its own separate and full-fledged interpretation process. Finally, it is not clear that irony can be successfully derived within traditional approaches, since ironic interpretations do not always result from simply producing an utterance that contradicts some observed state of affairs. These problems suggest that an alternative account may be needed.

The best alternative currently available in this case also seems to be offered by relevance theory. This approach treats irony as a case of interpretive use, involving an utterance that is being used to metarepresent another representation it resembles. On this view, irony is seen as a form of *implicit* echoic use, where a *dissociative* and *humorous* attitude is conveyed. There are many types of verbal irony, depending on the kind of gap exploited between the echoed and echoing representations, including mockery, exaggeration, and caricature, amongst others. The ensuing discussion will attempt to discuss the way these various types of interpretation arise.

The article is organised as follows. Firstly, we will consider the traditional approach to irony. Secondly, we will examine the main problems with this type of approach. Thirdly, we will explore the relevance-theoretic account and some of the objections levied against it. Finally, some conclusions will be drawn.

2. Approaches to Irony

In traditional approaches, such as that proposed by Grice, irony is seen as a trope, which involves changing the literal meaning of the expression in question for a figurative, non-literal interpretation. In the case of irony the change involves the substitution of what has been said literally with its opposite. Grice follows this classical tradition and argues that:

> [in irony] it is perfectly obvious to A [the speaker] and his audience that what A has said or has made as if to say is something he does not believe, and the audience knows that A knows that this is obvious to the audience. So, unless A's utterance is entirely pointless, A must be trying to get across some other proposition than the one he purports to be putting forward. This must be some obviously related proposition; the most obviously related proposition is the *contradictory* of the one he [the speaker] purports to be putting forward (Grice 1989:34, my italics).

This line of reasoning suggests that irony results from flouting the maxim of quality (i.e. do not say what you believe to be false). This violation allows the hearer to infer the opposite of what has been said in order to restore the assumption that the maxim has in fact been obeyed. To illustrate, consider the following example:

(1)   *On a rainy day:*

        What a beautiful day!

In this type of example, the speaker encodes a proposition that is clearly false in the situation at hand, since a rainy day is manifestly not seen as a beautiful day (in normal circumstances). From a Gricean point of view, the speaker is saying something that is manifestly false and, therefore, he is openly violating the maxim of quality (see also Allan & Salmani Nodoushan, 2015; Capone & Salmani Nodoushan, 2014; Livnat, 2011; Salmani Nodoushan & Allami, 2011; Salmani Nodoushan & Mohiyedin Ghomshei, 2014). However, if the hearer assumes that the speaker *is* in fact observing the cooperative principle and the maxim of quality, then the speaker must be taken to be communicating some related proposition that *would* satisfy this maxim (i.e. a true proposition). Grice argues that the related proposition actually communicated is the opposite of what has been said literally. Thus, the speaker would be conveying the following proposition:

(2)   What an ugly day!

This implicature allows the hearer to restore the application of the quality maxim by conveying a true proposition.

The same type of reasoning (involving a blatant violation of the quality maxim) also applies to other types of tropes, such as metaphor. What distinguishes each trope from the others is the type of related proposition being communicated. Thus, whilst in irony the implicature conveys the opposite of the literal meaning, in metaphor it conveys a related implicated comparison between the intended referent and the property being figuratively applied to it in the situation. In this respect, Grice (1989:34) argues, "[metaphorical] examples … involve categorial falsity, so the contradictory of what the speaker has made as if to say will, strictly speaking, be a truism; so it cannot be *that* that such a speaker is trying to get across. 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." To illustrate, consider the following example:

(3)   John is an angel.

In this type of example, it is manifestly clear that the speaker is not intending to communicate that the person concerned is an actual angel. For a start it is not clear whether angels actually exist, let alone that a human may be able to be one of them. Thus, on a Gricean approach, the speaker is flouting the maxim of quality. Consequently, in order to restore its application the hearer must derive some related proposition that satisfies the maxim. In the case of metaphor, that related proposition is supposed to be a related comparison, e.g.:

(4)   John is like an angel.

This comparison allows the hearer to satisfy the required standards of communication by involving a proposition that avoids violations of our communicative expectations (i.e. a proposition that is true).

The same kind of reasoning applies to other tropes, such as hyperbole, where the related proposition is a weaker implicature, or understatement, where the related proposition is a stronger implicature. To illustrate these two tropes, consider the following examples:

>   (5)   *Hyperbole:*
>
>   John is an Einstein.
>
>   (6)   *Understatement:*
>
>   John is just a little bit intelligent.

As shown above, the first example involves a hyperbole, where the speaker would normally be seen as intending to communicate something less than is literally said. That is, the hearer must *weaken* what has been said and infer an implicature that enables him to restore the application of the maxim of quality to something that is true. The second example involves an understatement, where the speaker would normally be seen to be intending to convey something more than is literally stated (i.e. the hearer must strengthen what has been said). In this case, the hearer must infer a stronger implicature in order to restore the application of the maxim of quality. The communicated implicatures in both cases would be as follows, respectively:

>   (7)   *Implicature Communicated by Hyperbole:*
>
>   John is very intelligent.
>
>   (8)   *Implicature Communicated by Understatement:*
>
>   John is quite intelligent.

Although hyperbole and understatement involve a gap between literal and intended meaning, it is normally only irony that is mentioned in relation to this kind of communicative phenomenon. The common feature between these different types of tropes is that there is a discrepancy between what is real (e.g. the true representation of the world) and what is expected (e.g. as represented by the meaning of the utterance in question).

This contrast gives rise to several more specific types of irony, such as verbal irony, where as shown above the gap is between what the speaker means by an utterance and what the utterance actually means literally. Other types of irony include self-irony (where one mocks oneself), irony of fate (where one tries to escape one's fate ultimately to succumb to it), romantic irony (where one tries to escape being loved by someone only to ultimately fall in love with that person), dramatic irony (where one cheats a type of death several times only to ultimately die that way), and situational irony (where one finds oneself in a situation that one tried hard to avoid or didn't intend to be in). All of these types of irony involve some kind of discrepancy or gap between what is real, on the one hand, and what is expected or wanted, on the other (for further details, see e.g. Preminger 1975 and Salmani Nodoushan, Salmani Nodoushan, 200a,b; 2007a,b,c; 2008a,b; 2012; 2013a,b; 2014a,b,c; 2015a,b; 2016a,b,c; Salmani Nodoushan, in press a,b). The ensuing discussion focuses specifically on the first type of irony, i.e. verbal irony (which is also known as sarcasm, particularly in the USA).

3. Traditional Approaches to Irony: Problems and Issues

As discussed above, traditional approaches to irony (i.e. the classical and Gricean accounts, see e.g. Grice 1989) regard this phenomenon as a flouting of the maxim of quality. They also claim that there is an arbitrary connection between what is said and what is meant by suggesting that what the speaker actually means is the opposite of what he says.

One of the first problems for this type of approach is that it does not say whether this convention is acquired or taught, since no explanation is offered as to why we have irony in the first place. For instance, it is not clear whether, on this view, irony is the result of spontaneous interpretation just like other forms of verbal communication or whether we need to learn how to interpret it. It would be reasonable to assume that, given the conventionalised nature of the analysis, some cultures would be expected to have it and others not (or at least have it in a different way).

However, the problem for the Gricean approach is that the evidence available suggests that irony arises *spontaneously* across all cultures, just like other forms of verbal communication. It doesn't have to be learnt or taught as a special case for humans to produce it or understand it. It comes to us naturally. However, this doesn't mean that there are no restrictions on its use, since it seems clear that it is not always appropriate to resort to irony in verbal communication (e.g. when hearers may find it offensive, in very serious situations, etc.). Equally, the interpretation of irony can be dependent on cultural knowledge. It may only arise when certain contextual assumptions are accessible to the hearers.

Another problem faced by traditional accounts is that they see irony as an indirect form of communication, since it involves conveying not the direct literal meaning of the utterance in question, but its opposite. From a relevance-theoretic point of view, this indirectness would be predicted to cause extra cognitive effort, which would need to be compensated for by additional or different cognitive effects. If a speaker didn't intend to communicate those extra or different effects, he could have communicated his intentions more economically by uttering what he meant directly. This would avoid the indirectness and the additional cognitive cost required in processing it. To illustrate, consider the above example of irony again. If, on a rainy day, all the speaker wanted to convey was that it was a horrible day, he could have said so more economically by direct means, as shown below once more:

(9)   What an ugly day!

By producing this direct utterance, the speaker would save the hearer the extra processing effort required to process the indirectness of irony. This is an aspect that doesn't seem to be considered in traditional accounts.

One of the main problems for traditional accounts, particularly the classical rhetorical account, is that irony (just like other tropes) is seen as a mere decorative device, without any specific content. However, from a relevance-theoretic point of view, this seems counterintuitive, since it wouldn't explain why a mere decorative device would be used in the first place, particularly one that requires extra effort to process. Its use would also be irrational, since the additional processing cost wouldn't have any obvious benefit. Furthermore, just saying that tropes are decorative devices doesn't explain the difference between the different tropes available. For instance, irony involves wit and humour, whereas metaphor involves comparisons. The different type of indirectness involved in each case seems to give rise to different effects, which an analysis based on mere decoration would not seem to explain.

A further problem for the traditional account involves the link between what is said and what is meant, since it is not obvious why hearers should derive the opposite of what is said. If, in interpreting irony, hearers are supposed to search for a related proposition, they could in principle derive any related proposition, rather than just the opposite. In other words, this type of account seems to be too unconstrained. What we need is some rational procedure to calculate what is meant from what is said. For example, one possibility would be to restrict the derivation of the intended implications (perhaps in a similar way to a Gricean conventional implicature), which would lead to a more conventionalised account of irony.

This type of problem prompted Grice to reconsider his analysis. In his later work, he (1989:53) acknowledges that "something is missing in this account [of irony]." In trying to

articulate his misgivings, he discussed the following type of situation. Two friends stroll down the street and see a shop window that is broken, at which point friend A says the following:

> (10)   Look, the window of that shop is in excellent condition.

On hearing this, friend B is likely to be confused, since it is not clear what was meant by that remark. Friend A may then explain that what he really meant was that he was trying to be ironical by saying something that was contradicted by what they saw in front of them. In this type of example, a Gricean account would predict that the ironical interpretation should have been successful, since what was said was clearly untrue (i.e. they were seeing the broken window in front of them) and what was intended was the opposite of what had been said. However, despite all the Gricean conditions being met, the irony still doesn't seem to arise, suggesting that there are some fundamental problems with this type of account and that an alternative analysis is needed.

One of the most explanatory alternative analyses available has been proposed by relevance theory. This approach attempts to provide an account where irony arises spontaneously as a natural phenomenon in verbal communication and is universal in its applicability across cultures. On this view, irony shares some of its features with other phenomena, but it also displays some features that distinguish it from the other tropes (e.g. metaphor). In what follows, this account is discussed in some more detail, including some of the potential problems it faces.

4. Irony, Relevance, and Utterance Interpretation

As mentioned above, the traditional Gricean account relies on the general notion of "related proposition" to explain the interpretation of irony. By contrast, from a relevance-theoretic point of view, it is possible to specify further what kind of related proposition is being meant. On this approach, irony involves the speaker echoing some kind of representation (e.g. a linguistic one, such as an utterance; or a conceptual one, such as a thought) which has been entertained by someone else (or the speaker at a different time). Sperber and Wilson (1995:238) argue:

> [in irony] the thought of the speaker which is interpreted by the utterance is itself an interpretation. It is an interpretation of a thought of someone other than the speaker (or of the speaker in the past). That is, these utterances are *second-degree* interpretations of someone else's thought (my italics).

In echoing a representation, the speaker wants to distance himself from its content and overlay it with a humorous attitude. The echoing effect means that the focus of attention shifts from the content of the representation to the attitude with which it is being echoed (i.e. humour). As Sperber and Wilson (ibid.:239) argue, "verbal irony invariably involves the *implicit* expression of an attitude, and […] the relevance of an ironical utterance invariably depends, at least in part, on the information it conveys about the speaker's *attitude* to the opinion echoed" (my italics).

One advantage of this approach is that by resorting to the notion of echoing, a connection is being established with other linguistic phenomena that may not be classified as irony but which may also involve some kind of quotation of existing representations, together with the overlaying of an attitude on the part of the speaker, such as meiosis/litotes (i.e. the use of understatement for rhetorical effect). This discussion suggests that there is a key underlying distinction between echoic and non-echoic uses of language, which in the relevance-theoretic approach is captured by the theoretical contrast between interpretive and descriptive uses of language (see Garmendia, 2015, for a neo-Gricean view). In what follows, we consider these concepts in more detail.

4.1. Echoic and Non-echoic Representations: The Descriptive/Interpretive Distinction

Relevance theory makes a fundamental distinction between two different ways in which language can be used to entertain representations (e.g. utterances or thoughts). Thus,

speakers may use utterances as descriptions of states of affairs in the world, in which case they are conveying their own thoughts and are using language descriptively. Alternatively, they may use their utterances as interpretations of other representations (e.g. other utterances or thoughts), in which case they are conveying someone else's thoughts (or theirs at a different time) and thereby are using language interpretively. As Sperber and Wilson (1995:228) argue:

> Any representation with a propositional form, and in particular any utterance, can be used to represent things in two ways, it can represent some state of affairs in virtue of its propositional form being true of that state of affairs; in this case we will say that the representation is a *description*, or that it is used *descriptively*. Or it can represent some other representation which also has a propositional form – a thought, for instance – in virtue of a resemblance between the two propositional forms; in this case we will say that the first representation is an *interpretation* of the second one, or that it is used *interpretively*.

To illustrate this contrast, consider the following example:

(11)　　John:　Would Peter like some chocolate?

　　　　　　Anne:　He doesn't eat sweets.

In this type of example, the answer could be interpreted in two ways. One the one hand, the speaker could be seen to be communicating her own description of a state of affairs, whereby she would be using her utterance descriptively and committing herself to the truth of the proposition expressed (i.e. she would be engaging in descriptive use of language). On the other hand, the speaker could be seen not as communicating her own opinion, but rather as reporting what Peter had said (for example, in relation to an offer that may have been made earlier). In this case, she would not be committing herself to the truth of the proposition expressed (she would be merely reproducing it for the benefit of the hearer) and would thus be engaging in interpretive use of language. The explicatures communicated in each case would be as follows, respectively:

(12)　　*Interpretation based on Descriptive Use of Language*:

　　　　　　Peter doesn't eat sweets.

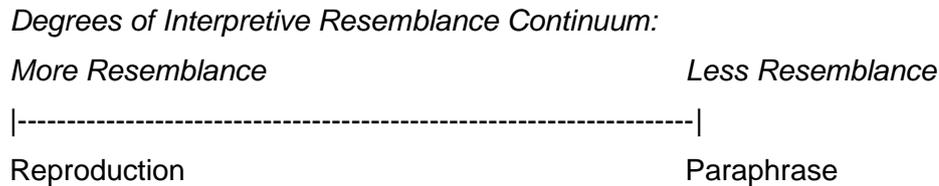(13)　　*Interpretation based on Interpretive Use of Language*:

　　　　　　Peter has said that he doesn't eat sweets.

In the first case the speaker is committing herself to the truth of the explicature, since she is providing her own description of the state of affairs in question. By contrast, in the second case she is not committing herself to the proposition expressed, as she is merely reporting what Peter has said.

As the above discussion indicates, descriptive uses of language involve descriptions of states of affairs in the world, whereas interpretive uses involve representations of other representations. The key relationship between the representations involved in interpretive use is one of resemblance of some kind (e.g. content or form). In other words, when a hearer processes an utterance interpretively, she will be looking for another representation that resembles the original utterance in some way. This is similar to what Grice proposed (by the notion of "related proposition"), but in this case the concept is more fundamental, since it appeals to a basic phenomenon that arises from comparing different representations, namely, resemblance, and it could in principle cover any form of similarity, e.g. content, form, sound, etc.

The degree of similarity between echoed and echoing representations is not fixed, but rather variable. In particular, an utterance may be used interpretively to reproduce another representation word for word or alternatively it may paraphrase it loosely. In this respect, Blakemore (1992:105) argues, "a speaker who intends his utterance to be understood as an

interpretation […] can […] be taken to be raising expectations of *faithfulness.*" She then argues further, "the degree of faithfulness attempted varies from situation to situation" (Blakemore ibid.). Clearly, in interpretive use there must be some degree of resemblance between the echoed and the echoing representations, since otherwise it would not be possible to establish an interpretive relationship at all. In other words, the speaker must be taken to have produced a sufficiently faithful interpretation of the echoed representation (i.e. a sufficiently resembling utterance). The minimum degree of resemblance may be set at the level of loose paraphrase and the maximum at the level of identical reproduction, as illustrated below:

Degrees of Interpretive Resemblance Continuum:

More Resemblance   *Less Resemblance*

|--|

Reproduction   Paraphrase

To illustrate, consider the above example again on an interpretive use reading. On this interpretation, the speaker's answer would be taken to have resembled Peter's thought or utterance to a sufficiently faithful degree. Thus, the speaker's utterance would be compatible with any of the following representations attributed to Peter:

(14)   Peter said or thought:

    a.   I don't eat sweets. *(Literal representation: reproduction)*

    b.   I don't eat chocolates. *(Mixture of reproduction and paraphrase)*

    c.   I don't eat processed foods. *(Closer to a paraphrase)*

    d.   I only accept foods low in calories. *(Looser paraphrase)*

As shown, the speaker of the interpretively used utterance could have been echoing any of the above representations. Each would involve a different degree of resemblance between Anne's echoing utterance and Peter's echoed representation: i.e. Anne's answer would be sufficiently faithful to any of the possible representations attributed to Peter listed above. For instance, if what Peter had actually thought or said was the first representation listed, then Anne's rendering of it would be literal (i.e. she would have uttered a reproduction of Peter's representation). If, on the other hand, Peter's thought or utterance had been the second representation listed, then Anne's rendering would be less than literal, mixing some literal aspects with some paraphrased ones. The same kind of reasoning would apply to the other representations listed, which involve a gradual decrease in the degree of resemblance between the echoed and the echoing representations.

The degree of resemblance derived by the hearer in cases of interpretive use will be in accordance with the principle of optimal relevance. That is, the hearer will seek an interpretation that will satisfy her expectations of relevance. As Sperber and Wilson (1995:231) argue, "how close an interpretation is, and in particular when it is literal, can be determined on the basis of the principle of relevance." For example, if a report were to be made in the context of a court case, the degree of resemblance expected would be high, e.g. a reproduction. If, on the other hand, the report were to be produced in the context of a bar conversation, then the degree of resemblance expected would be much lower, e.g. a paraphrase.

In general, hearers avoid deriving degrees of resemblance that would not justify the cognitive effort involved in achieving them unless there are cognitive effects to offset the extra cost. Consequently, in most cases the degree of resemblance derived will be less than literal, i.e. less than full reproduction. As Blakemore (1992:105) argues, "a fully identical representation is *not* always the most relevant one" (my italics). Often this is because reproducing a representation literally requires more cognitive effort (e.g. memory, writing,

etc.) than offering a paraphrase in which the speaker chooses his own words (i.e. the ones that come easiest to him, thereby requiring less effort from him). This is why in interpretive uses of language, it is normally expected that speakers will tend to produce less-than-literal interpretations (i.e. paraphrases for the most part) and hearers will derive less-than-literal resemblances (unless the context specifically requires otherwise). In establishing the degree of resemblance, hearers will be guided by the second clause of the presumption of optimal relevance, where they will assume that the most relevant interpretation compatible with the speaker's abilities and preferences will be one that saves them effort in interpreting attributed representations. In this respect, Sperber and Wilson (1995:234) argue, "the hearer should take an utterance as fully literal *only* when nothing less than full literality will confirm the presumption of relevance" (my italics).

The above discussion suggests that hearers must make an early decision as to whether the utterance they are processing is intended descriptively or interpretively (either in full or in part). As this decision is quite important to the interpretation process, it would be reasonable to expect languages to have developed linguistic devices to allow speakers some means of disambiguating the use of language they intend to apply at any given time. As expected, this is indeed the case. Most languages seem to have several ways of indicating the type of language use intended by the speaker. To illustrate, consider the following alternative answers in relation to the above example, where each unambiguously indicates that the speaker is using the utterance interpretively:

(15) a. He has said that he doesn't eat sweets.

b. He has written that he doesn't eat sweets.

c. He has decided that he doesn't eat sweets.

As shown, all the alternative answers provided here include some linguistic unit which indicates that the utterance is being used interpretively. In particular, they indicate that the subordinate clause represents a thought or an utterance that is attributed to someone else. For instance, they include expressions such as *has said*, *has written*, or *has decided*, all of which linguistically encode that the ensuing subordinate clause is not being used descriptively by the speaker of the utterance, but rather that it is being attributed to someone else. These would be cases of *overt* interpretive use. By contrast, when the speaker doesn't provide overt indications, such as in the original example, the resulting cases are instances of *implicit* interpretive use. In these cases, hearers must decide whether the speaker intended his utterance descriptively or interpretively using purely inferential means. In general, speakers will leave interpretive uses implicit when they trust the hearers to be able to derive them on their own. Otherwise, they might need to encode them linguistically in order to avoid misunderstandings.

It is worth pointing out here that interpretive use is in fact more common than the above discussion suggests. As Sperber and Wilson (1995:231) argue:

any utterance involves at least two relationships: a relationship between its propositional form and a thought of the speaker's, and one of the four possible relationships between that thought and what it represents. [Thus:] metaphor involves an interpretive relation between the propositional form of an utterance and the thought it represents; irony involves an interpretive relation between the speaker's thought and attributed thoughts or utterances; assertion involves a descriptive relation between the speaker's thought and a state of affairs in the world; requesting or advising involves a descriptive relation between the speaker's thought and a desirable state of affairs; interrogatives and exclamatives involve an interpretive relation between the speaker's thought and desirable thoughts. (For further details, see also Sperber and Wilson ibid.:232).

The specific interpretive relation that we are concerned with here is ironical, so the intended relationship is between thoughts and other thoughts or utterances, which is the focus of the rest of the article.

As will become clear below, the assumption followed in this book is that irony is a case of *implicit* interpretive use, since its interpretation precludes the use of overt linguistic markers to indicate the attribution of the utterance to someone else. If any overt linguistic markers were to be included, the ironical effect would be lost, which suggests that implicitness in interpretive use is a basic feature in the successful communication of ironical interpretations. This implicit aspect was acknowledged by Grice himself, who argues that "to be ironical is, among other things, to pretend … and while one wants the pretense to be recognized as such, to announce it as a pretense would *spoil the effect*" (1989:54, my italics).

4.2. Interpretive Use of Language and Irony: Echoing Attitudes

When we use an utterance descriptively, we often overlay it with a wide range of attitudes, e.g. surprise, incredulity, hope, etc. Similarly, in interpretive uses of language speakers may add their own attitudes to the report being made, e.g. disbelief, mockery, etc. However, this is not always the case, since in some interpretive uses a speaker may be expected to avoid expressing a personal attitude to what is being reported. For instance, in court room cases a witness may be asked to report what someone said without changing the linguistic form or expressing his own attitude to what is being reported. Equally, in translation an interpreter or translator is routinely expected to convey the original message in the target language without adding his own attitudes or content to it.

However, in some cases of interpretive use the speaker's own attitudes may be quite relevant to what is being communicated. They may even be the focus of what the speaker intends to convey. To illustrate, consider the following example:

(16) *Teacher to student*:

Have you read the article?

In this type of case, the teacher is not so much interested in the actual content of the article as in the student's reaction to it. Often the focus of the report is the student's own response or attitude to the content reported. Another instance of this can be found in the following example:

(17) *Among friends:*

John: I can't go to your party.

Anne: You can't go to my party. Well, it's not the first time it happens.

In this type of case, the first part of the answer seems to be a report of the original utterance, since it involves a repetition of it. However, the main point of the answer in this type of situation would not normally involve reporting the content of the first representation back to the hearer, since the hearer already knows the reported information (i.e. he produced it in the first place). Instead, the focus here is the speaker's attitude to the reported information. That is, by repeating the original utterance, the speaker indicates, for example, that she has got the message and is considering her response to it (or that she is not happy with it, etc.).

These types of example (where what is important is the speaker's attitude to the reported information) involve an echoic use of language. That is, in this type of case speakers are not just using the utterance interpretively, but they also infuse it with their own attitudes over and above the reported content. This type of interpretive use is the basis for the relevance-theoretic analysis of irony, which is seen as a form of implicit echoic use, where the focus of using language interpretively is to convey the speaker's attitude towards the reported information (in an implicit way).

In echoic uses speakers have a choice between agreeing or disagreeing with the attributed representations (see also Bianchi, 2014). In the first case, the attitudes are associative or endorsing, whereas in the second case they are dissociative or disapproving. To illustrate, consider the following examples regarding the behaviour of a child:

    (18)   *Between parents:*

           John: Peter is behaving much better.

           On seeing Peter gather his clothes:

           Anne: Yes, Peter *is* behaving much better.

    (19)   *Between parents:*

           John: Peter is behaving much better.

           On seeing Peter break a glass:

           Anne: Yes, Peter *is* behaving much better.

As shown here, in the first example Anne repeats John's statement associatively and approvingly. In this case, the speaker is endorsing the reported information. However, in the second example Anne's repetition is interpreted very differently, since she is manifestly uttering it in a dissociative and disapproving way. In this case, the speaker is not only disagreeing with the reported information, she is also mocking it. In each case the communicated explicature would be as follows, respectively:

    (20)   As John says, Peter is behaving much better.

    (21)   It is not as John says. Peter is not behaving much better.

Whilst the associative attitude involved in the first case has not received much attention in the literature, the dissociative attitude involved in the second example has attracted a lot more interest as an instance of verbal irony. This type of example shows that verbal irony seems to require an implicit dissociative attitude, which is the basis for successfully conveying the humour connected with this communicative phenomenon.

The above discussion suggests that verbal irony results from the use of implicit dissociative attitudes towards an implicitly attributed representation. The type of dissociative attitude involved may vary from situation to situation, thereby giving rise to different kinds of verbal irony (e.g. humorous irony, sarcastic irony, sardonic irony, etc.). What verbal irony seems to share with other types of irony is the element of dissociation or disapproval. As Sperber and Wilson (1995:239) argue, "the attitude expressed by an ironical utterance is invariably of the rejecting or disapproving kind." From a relevance-theoretic point of view, this range of ironical attitudes arise naturally and are not learnt or taught (as Grice would be forced to argue). They are the result of spontaneous interpretation in verbal communication.

5. Types of Verbal Irony

So far we have considered some of the basic assumptions on which the relevance-based analysis of irony rests. In this section, we will contrast it with earlier approaches in some more detail and consider different types of verbal irony further.

As has been indicated, Grice (1989), as well as other authors such as Levinson (2000), adopt a traditional approach to irony, where what is communicated is the opposite of what is said. To illustrate, consider one of the above examples, repeated below for convenience:

    (22)   *On a rainy day:*

           What a beautiful day!

In this type of case, a traditional account would predict that what has been communicated is a related proposition contradicting what was said: i.e. it was not a beautiful day. However,

this type of analysis is subsumed within the relevance-theoretic approach. From this point of view, the reason why the above utterance can give rise to irony is because it is echoic. In particular, it is echoing a typical statement people make when they enjoy a sunny day. The speaker uses this utterance precisely to draw the hearer's attention to the type of stereotypical statement being made and (given the contradictory contextual evidence available) to dissociate himself from it with a mocking attitude (which ultimately gives rise to the irony conveyed). It is worth noting here that if the speaker had simply said the opposite of what he meant without any echoing effect, then the irony would not arise. The contradictory effect noticed by Grice is covered, on the relevance-theoretic approach, by the dissociative attitude communicated.

The relevance-theoretic approach also seems to deal with cases where irony doesn't arise. For instance, earlier we considered an example where an ironical interpretation wasn't available (despite the fact that all the Gricean conditions were met). To illustrate, consider that example again (uttered by someone on seeing a broken shop window), repeated below for convenience:

> (23)   Look, that shop window is in excellent condition.

In this type of example, the Gricean conditions for irony are met, since something blatantly false has been said with the intention of communicating the opposite. However, the ironical effect doesn't seem to arise, which suggests that the Gricean approach doesn't always make the right predictions (see also Piskorska, 2014). This type of problem typifies the need for an alternative account, which relevance theory attempts to provide. On this approach, the reason why irony doesn't arise in the above scenario is because there is no manifest representation that is being echoed in the situation at hand. That is, the utterance (as presented) cannot give rise to irony because one of its basic conditions has not been met. Of course, this does not mean that the utterance in question could not be used ironically in a different scenario, where appropriate contextual assumptions were available. For instance, consider the following alternative situation. Two friends walk down the high street. Friend A complains that many shop windows in the town have been vandalised recently. After seeing several shop windows that are intact, friend B remarks that there is no evidence of vandalism. However, immediately after that remark, they both come across a broken shop window and friend A produces the above utterance. Clearly, in this situation the utterance in question *would* give rise to irony, since it is mocking the remark made a few moments earlier by friend B. This suggests once more that two of the key factors involved in successfully communicating irony are implicit echoic use and a dissociative attitude.

The above discussion also provides an explanation for the frequent use of quotations in the communication of verbal irony. Often communicators refer to famous or well-known quotations in order to make manifest the fact that they are using their utterance echoicly with a mocking attitude (made manifest by the contradictory evidence available in the situation at hand).

This account also predicts one of the main problems found in the identification of irony, which is that many ironical uses do not involve well-known or famous quotations and this may make it difficult for them to be recognised as irony. The problem here is that, since ironical uses are implicit, the echoic effect may be lost in this type of case, as hearers may not recognise the quote being used. Another problem lies in the fact that the echoing representation may not always be very faithful to the echoed representation (i.e. there isn't a high degree of resemblance) and, consequently, hearers may fail to notice the echoing effect and thus the irony. In general, Sperber and Wilson (1995:240) argue that the following conditions need to be met for the recognition of irony: "the recovery of [irony] … depends, first, on a recognition of the utterance as echoic; second, on an identification of the source of the opinion echoed; and third, on a recognition that the speaker's attitude to the opinion echoed is one of rejection or dissociation."

So far we have mainly focused on verbal irony resulting from contradiction, giving rise to a mockery effect. However, irony can also arise from exaggerating and caricaturing representations, which exploit a different kind of discrepancy. In this type of case, irony arises not from a contradiction between what is said and what is meant as shown above, but from an exaggeration of reality. To illustrate, consider the following example:

> (24)　*After spilling ink all over his trousers:*
>
>　　John:　It is only a small stain.
>
>　　Anne:　Of course, it is only a tiny stain.

As indicated, the first utterance is seen as under-valuing the importance of the incident by suggesting that it is insignificant. The intention of the speaker here may be seen as an attempt to downplay the event in order to avoid criticism, a common reason for using understated representations. However, the second utterance mocks that attempt by exaggerating and caricaturing the undervaluing effect shown in the first utterance. The result is an ironic interpretation involving mockery and humour, whose key features are (a) the echoing of a sufficiently manifest representation (in this case a preceding utterance in the conversational exchange); (b) a sufficiently high degree of resemblance between the echoed and the echoing representations, so that the relationship between the two representations is recognisable; (c) an implicit ironical attitude on the part of the speaker, suggesting mockery and ridicule; (d) some kind of gap between the representation used and reality (obviated in this case by exaggeration and caricature). These features (particularly the last one) contribute to alerting the hearer about the ironic attitude (in other cases a gesture or other means of signalling this attitude could be used, or alternatively the speaker could rely on the hearer deriving it by himself). The nature of the gap between the representation used and the reality described will not only contribute to the triggering of the ironic interpretation, but it will also help determine the type of verbal irony involved (e.g. mockery, exaggeration, caricature, etc.).

One important aspect in the above discussion is the relationship between the echoed and the echoing representations. As indicated above, this relationship is based on the notion of resemblance, which may be present to varying degrees. It may range from literal interpretations (i.e. full identity between the two representations) to less-than-literal interpretations (i.e. partial similarity between the two representations). In cases of pure mockery, the resemblance between the echoed and echoing representations could be full reproduction (i.e. complete identity), thereby involving a literal interpretation. By contrast, in cases of exaggeration or caricature the resemblance is less than full (i.e. there is only *sufficient* resemblance), thereby involving a less-than-literal interpretation.

A further type of verbal irony involves assumed or implicated assumptions. In this type of case, what is being echoed is not the actual words uttered by someone, but rather what was implied or assumed by the speaker. To illustrate, consider the following example:

> (25)　*In the car:*
>
>　　John:　I am going to speed up a little to get to the match on time.
>
>　　Anne:　[In a serious tone] There are speed cameras on this road.
>
>　　John:　Yeah, of course, they are going to fine me.

Anne's utterance gives rise to the implication that if the speed limit is broken and there are speed cameras on the road, they may be caught and a fine may be issued. John's answer is an attempt to echo this implicature sarcastically. By doing so, he is attributing the implicature to Anne and at the same time he is dissociating himself from it, thus pouring some scorn over the implied opinion.

This type of verbal irony can be achieved even if Anne didn't produce an utterance at all. She could simply look at John in a disapproving manner and, that way, make manifest what

she thought of his intentions. This is a typical way of expressing one's thoughts, which should be easily read by someone who knows the person in question. This type of scenario suggests that ironic interpretations do not necessarily have to rely on words or utterances to be successful. They can also arise by echoing thoughts, as long as it is clear that an echoing event is taking place and it is easily recognisable by the hearer.

We can expand the above scenario to cover irony directed not just at thoughts or utterances produced by individuals, but also at those produced by different groups of people. This is a type of situation often found in political irony, where the humour may be directed at political parties or groups, rather than specific individuals. For example, one could be ironical about conservatives, socialists, communists or any other group, political or otherwise. Similarly, we could convey irony about the British, the French, etc. Any human group can be the recipient of irony and humour, as long as there are typical representations associated with that group (e.g. the British eating roast beef, the French eating frogs, etc.).

One common feature between the different types of irony available is that a relationship of complicity emerges between speaker and audience. Reyes (1994:55) argues, "when an expression is echoed with an ironical attitude, the speaker forces the hearer to construct meaning in common, in a pleasant game that highlights the *complicity* between both of them. Irony reinforces the relationship between interlocutors, activates points of view and shared knowledge, cements their affinities" (my italics and translation). The speaker often relies on the hearer supplying a wide range of weakly intended implicatures that become shared assumptions between the two, thereby increasing the sense of complicity mentioned above. To illustrate, consider the following example:

(26) *Someone says to a partner on seeing a mother losing patience with her children:*

How wonderful it is to have children!

It seems clear that in this context the above utterance will be interpreted ironically. That is, the speaker is using a description that does not fit the scene observed; he is implicitly echoing the sort of statement associated with loving parents; and he is dissociating himself from the opinion expressed. Since an ironical interpretation involves a degree of indirectness, the hearer will be looking for extra cognitive effects to offset the higher cognitive effort associated with it. This means that a range of possible implicatures may be derived, such as the following (cf. Reyes 1994:54):

(27) *Possible implicatures of ironical interpretation:*

a. Having children is not always wonderful.

b. There are parents who project their aggression on their children.

c. The speaker feels superior to parents who project their aggressiveness on their children.

d. The speaker is perhaps thinking whether to have children and is considering what it might be like.

e. The speaker believes that it might be a good idea to have children, in spite of the fact that it could lead him to project his aggressiveness on his children.

The above assumptions could be part of the range of implicatures communicated, though not all of them would necessarily have to be intended with the same degree of strength. Thus, whilst the first three might be strongly intended, the last two might be only weakly intended or may even be the sole responsibility of the hearer. This seems to suggest that in irony the thoughts communicated are not necessarily well circumscribed and delimited.

The contrast with literal use of language becomes clear if we compare the above (indirect) ironical utterance to a (direct) non-ironical utterance. To illustrate, consider the following alternative utterance produced in the same circumstances:

(28)   *To a partner on seeing a mother losing her patience with her children:*

Having children can be frustrating.

As shown, in this case the speaker uses a direct, literal, non-ironical utterance, which lacks the range of weakly suggestive implicatures of the ironical utterance (and it may also lack the 'ironic' tone of voice often associated with this type of utterance). Clearly, in some communicative situations a direct, precise, and strong form of communication such as this may be appropriate (e.g. in legal settings, in instructions on how to operate machinery, etc.). Whilst in others a more indirect, vaguer and weaker form of communication may be more suitable, particularly when the communicator doesn't have clearly demarcated intentions in mind or prefers to provide an impressionistic idea of what he means (e.g. in informal situations, chats with friends, etc.).

Traditional accounts (such as Grice's) treat metaphor and irony as tropes, where they are analysed in the same way as overt floutings of the maxim of quality (i.e. where hearers need to derive some kind of implicature in order to preserve the application of the maxim). This implicature involves a proposition that is related to the utterance produced: i.e. a contradiction in the case of irony and a comparison in the case of metaphor. However, a relevance-theoretic account treats metaphor and irony very differently. On this approach metaphor involves descriptive use of language, whereas irony involves interpretive use. Thus, irony, unlike metaphor, requires the expression of an attitude to an attributed representation. Its comprehension involves sophisticated mind-reading capabilities, since a hearer must be able to represent someone else's thoughts. In particular, he needs second-order mind-reading abilities (e.g. I believe that X believes that Q). By contrast, metaphor only needs first-order mind-reading capabilities (e.g. I believe that Q). If this account is right, the interpretation of metaphor and irony would need different comprehension abilities, contrary to what the Gricean account proposes.

The relevance-theoretic analysis seems to be corroborated by experimental evidence that indicates that the two phenomena are understood differently (see e.g. Happé 1993; Langdon, Davies and Coltheart 2002). The experimental evidence in question was obtained from autistic individuals and patients who suffered damage to their right hemisphere as a result of a stroke. In both cases, individuals displayed differences in their interpretation of metaphor and irony, suggesting that the two phenomena do indeed involve different cognitive abilities (since they are located in different parts of the brain and can be damaged independently of each other).

So far, we have considered the main advantages of the relevance-theoretic account. However, a number of criticisms have also been made about this approach, which are considered in what follows.

6. Criticisms with the Relevance-theoretic Account

Three types of criticism have been levied against the relevance-theoretic account, i.e. (a) issues about the types of verbal irony available, (b) arguments about whether the notion of pretence is involved, and (c) some questions about the terminology used. In what follows, we discuss them in turn.

The first type of objection involves the possibility that there may be two different kinds of verbal irony (rather than one, see Sperber and Wilson 1998b for further details and discussion). One kind would require echoic use and the other would not involve any echo at all. The latter would cover cases where it isn't clear that an utterance has been echoed, e.g. as in the beautiful day example discussed above, whereas the former would involve other more clearly echoic cases of irony. However, one of the problems with this objection is that it

is not clear why we would need to assume that there are *two* types of irony, rather than just one, since it seems to complicate the analysis provided unnecessarily. In other words, if it is possible to provide an account based on just one type of irony, it would (other things being equal) be more desirable than one which posited two different types. As was discussed above, the relevance-theoretic approach covers both types of irony (involving attributed and unattributed echoic uses), since this framework allows for the possibility that echoes can be either specific or general (i.e. based on what a certain person or group would say in a given situation without necessarily identifying the specific individual or actual utterance event). Additionally, it also accounts for failed echoic uses, since it predicts that if the addressee doesn't notice that a reference is being made to another representation, she will be unable to recognise the intended echo. A final point worth mentioning here is that since the second type of irony suggested in this objection is supposed to be accounted for along Gricean lines (as a violation of the maxim of quality, by saying what you do not believe to be true, which in this case involves implicitly echoing someone else's statement), it leaves this type of approach open to the same counterexamples discussed in relation to the traditional accounts.

Another objection made against the relevance-theoretic approach is that irony doesn't seem to involve echoic use but rather pretence. On this view, what speakers do is not echo or mock another representation, but rather they pretend to believe the representation in question and hope that the audience will identify the pretence and interpret the utterance accordingly (see Clark and Gerrig 1984). However, this doesn't seem to amount to a serious argument against the relevance-theoretic account, since on this approach the speaker of an ironically echoed utterance is not committing himself to its truth (i.e. he hopes that the addressee will identify this lack of commitment). As a result, the idea of pretence would be subsumed within the relevance-theoretic analysis.

A further objection raised in relation to the relevance-theoretic account involves the terminology used, where some scholars propose different terms to the ones used above (see e.g. Kreuz and Glucksberg 1989; Kumon-Nakamura et al. 1995). However, on closer inspection this type of objection doesn't seem to be a problem either, since often what is being proposed by those authors involves the same type of account as that proposed by relevance theory with the only difference that they use alternative terms. In the end these differences don't actually affect the underlying analysis provided.

Another objection involves the notions of direct and indirect quotation. In this respect, Martin (1992) argues that the relevance-theoretic approach is wrong in treating irony as a quotation, given that if real quotation marks are inserted around the ironic material, the ironic effect is reduced. To illustrate, consider the following example:

>   (29)   The US, which is the solution to Iraq's problems, has been attacked.

In this type of example, the constituent separated off by commas is intended as an ironic remark. However, if we were to insert inverted commas to signal its quotation usage, the irony would be reduced, as shown below:

>   (30)   The US, "which is the solution to Iraq's problems", has been attacked.

The question that arises here is why this should be the case, particularly since a relevance-theoretic account relies on echoic use in the first case. Surely, by adding the quotation marks the ironical interpretation should become easier for the hearer. Martin argues that this shows that irony must be restricted to indirect quotations (where the echoing effect is not explicit), rather than direct quotations (where the echoing is explicit). However, this objection doesn't affect the relevance-theoretic account proposed above for two reasons. First, this account proposes that irony must be *implicit*, not explicit, and using direct quotation marks makes the echoic use explicit, thereby flouting one of the conditions needed to convey irony (which explains the perceived reduced effect reported by Martin in his discussion). Second, actual quotations are not necessarily excluded from irony, as some of the earlier examples

show. The key issue here is whether the ironical attitude has been communicated implicitly through echoic use or not. If it has, an ironic interpretation may arise. Otherwise, it may not.

A further objection raised against the relevance-theoretic account involves instances where there is a modification of the original representation. In some cases, well-known expressions or sayings are turned round to induce an ironical effect. To illustrate, consider the following example, involving a common saying in English:

(31)   A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush.

However, if we turn it round, an ironic effect may arise, as shown below:

(32)   A bird in the bush is worth two in the hand.

The objection here is that a hearer who interprets this type of (cynical) utterance may in fact believe it (e.g. an ecologist, etc.). However, this wouldn't detract from the ironic interpretation, which could still obtain. From a Gricean point of view, this type of case would be a counterexample, since the Gricean approach would predict that the utterance would involve a flouting of the maxim of quality. But it seems clear that in this type of case there may in fact be no such flouting at all (particularly when the addressee believes the resulting proposition), and yet the ironic interpretation could still arise, which poses a problem for the Gricean account. By contrast, a relevance-theoretic approach seems to be able to account for it. On this view, what the speaker is doing is echoing the saying in question but not literally. That is, he is echoing it in a less-than-literal way by using a paraphrase. As the notion of interpretive use covers a wide range of echoic interpretations from literal renderings (i.e. reproductions) to less-than-literal reports (i.e. paraphrases), the above type of example would be covered by this framework. What is more, from a relevance-theoretic point of view, there wouldn't be any problem in having the dissociative attitude aimed at the original representation (i.e. the literal saying) whilst at the same time expressing a proposition that the speaker actually believes. In other words, there doesn't need to be an explicit contradiction for irony to arise. The dissociation may involve not the explicitly produced utterance, but rather some other implicitly echoed representation.

7. Conclusion

In this article we have discussed the interpretation of irony. It was noted that traditional approaches to irony group it together with other tropes, such as metaphor, hyperbole and understatement. On this type of approach, all these tropes share the property of involving some discrepancy between what is said and what is meant. In the case of the Gricean approach, irony is accounted for as a violation of the maxim of quality, where the speaker expresses a proposition that is blatantly false and infers a related true proposition as an implicature (i.e. the contradiction of what was said), thereby restoring the assumption that the maxim has been adhered to.

A number of problems with the traditional approaches were discussed. Firstly, it was argued that they involve arbitrary conventions, rather than explanatory analyses. Secondly, they treat irony as a decorative device, rather than as a phenomenon that requires a specific full-fledged interpretation process. Lastly, it is not clear how irony is calculated, since it is not always possible to communicate it by simply meaning the opposite of what has been said. These problems seem to suggest that the traditional approaches are not able to offer an explanatory account of irony and that an alternative approach is needed.

Relevance theory seems to offer the best alternative account available. On this approach, irony is treated as a case of interpretive use of language, where an utterance is used to represent another representation it resembles to varying degrees. Irony is also seen as involving implicit echoic use, where the main relevance of the utterance lies in (a) the expression of a speaker's attitude towards the echoed representation and (b) the dissociative and humorous nature of that attitude. Several types of verbal irony were considered, including mocking, exaggeration, and caricature. We also discussed the mind-

reading nature involved in irony, which requires a second order ability to derive the intended interpretation successfully.

The discussion ended by considering a number of objections that have been raised against the relevance-theoretic account. In general, it was noted that these objections don't seem to pose too much of a problem for the theory, since they can all be explained using the machinery provided by the framework.

References

Allan, K. & M. A. Salmani Nodoushan (2015) 'Pragmatics: The state of the art (An online interview with Keith Allan)'. *International Journal of Language Studies, 9*(3): 147-154.

Asher, N. & A. Lascarides (1995) 'Lexical Disambiguation in a Discourse Context.' *Journal of Semantics* 12, 1995, pp.69-108.

Austin, J.L. (1976) *How to do things with words.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Bach, K. and R.M. Harnish (1979) *Linguistic Communication and Speech Acts.* Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.

Bach, K. (1994) "Conversational implicature". *Mind and Language* 9:124-162.

Bach, K. (1999) 'The myth of conventional implicature'. *Linguistics and Philosophy* 22:327-366.

Bell, M. (1975) 'Questioning'. *Philosophical Quarterly* 25: 193-211.

Bianchi, C. (2014) 'Slurs and appropriation: An echoic account.' *Journal of Pragmatics* 66: 35-44.

Bird, G. (1994) 'Relevance Theory and Speech Acts'. In S. Tsohatzidis (ed.). pp. 292-311.

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

Blakemore, D. (1988) 'The organization of discourse'. In F. Newmeyer (ed.) *Linguistics: The Cambridge Survey IV. Language: The Socio-cultural Context.* pp. 229-250. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

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

Blakemore, D. (1994) 'Echo questions: A pragmatic account.' *Lingua* 94: 197-211.

Blakemore, D. (2002) *Meaning and Relevance: The Semantics and Pragmatics of Discourse Connectives.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Blass, R. (1989b) 'Are there logical relations in a text?.' *Lingua* 90(1/2): 91-110.

Blass, R. (1990) *Relevance Relations in Discourse: A Study with Special Reference to Sissala.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Bolinger, D. (1989) *Meaning and Form.* London: Longman.

Brown, P. & S. Levinson (1987) *Politeness.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Brown, G. & G. Yule (1983) *Discourse analysis.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Capone, A. & M. A. Salmani Nodoushan (2014) 'On indirect reports and language games: Evidence from Persian'. *Rivista Italiana di Filosofia del Linguaggio, 8*(2): 26-42. (DOI 10.4396/20141206)

Carruthers, P. & J. Boucher (eds.) (1998) *Language and thought.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Carston, R. (1988) 'Implicature, explicature, and truth-conditional semantics.' In R. Kempson (ed.) *Mental representations.* pp. 155-182. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Carston, R. (1993) 'Conjunction, explanation and relevance.' *Lingua* 90:28-33.

Carston, R. (1998) 'Informativeness, relevance and scalar implicature.' In R. Carston & S. Uchida (eds.) *Relevance Theory.* pp. 179-236. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Carston, R. (2002) *Thoughts and utterances*. Oxford: Blackwell.

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

Chafe, W.L. (1976) 'Givenness, contrastiveness, definiteness, subjects, topics, and point of View.' In C.N. Li (ed.) *Subject and topic.* pp. 25-65. London: Academic Press.

Clark, B. (1993) 'Relevance and "pseudo-imperatives".' *Linguistics and Philosophy* 16:79-121.

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

Clark, H & R. Gerrig (1984) 'On the pretense theory of irony*.' Journal of Experimental Psychology: General* 113: 121-26.

Cole, P. & J. Morgan (eds.) (1975) *Syntax and Semantics 9: Pragmatics.* New York: Academic Press.

Collini, S. (ed.) (1992) *Interpretation and Overinterpretation.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Currie, G. (2005) 'A pretence account of irony.' MS.

Dancy, J., Moravcsik, J. & C. Taylor (1988) *Human Agency: Language, Duty and Value.* Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Davis, S. (ed.) (1991) *Pragmatics: A reader.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Deacon, T. (1997) *The symbolic species.* London: Penguin.

Eysenck, M.W. (1993) *Principles of Cognitive Psychology.* Hove: Erlbaum.

Fodor, J.A. (1975) *The language of thought.* New York: Crowell.

Fodor, J. D. (1977) *Semantics: Theories of Meaning in Generative Grammar*. Hassocks: Harvester Press.

Fodor, J. (1983) *The modularity of mind.* Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.

Fodor, J.A. (1998a) *In critical condition.* Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Fodor, J.A. (1998b) *Concepts.* Oxford: Oxford University Press

Frawley, W. (1992) *Linguistic Semantics.* New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Garmendia, J. (2015) 'A (neo)Gricean account of irony: An answer to relevance theory.' *International Review of Pragmatics* 7(1): 40-79.

Gernsbacher, M. (ed.) (1994) *Handbook of Psycholinguistics.* San Diego: Academic Press.

Gibbs, R. (1994) 'Figurative thought and figurative language.' In M. Gernsbacher. *Handbook of Psycholinguistics.* pp. 411-446. San Diego: Academic Press.

Glucksberg, S. (2001) *Understanding Figurative Language: From Metaphors to Idioms.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Goffman, E. (1981) 'Response cries.' In E. Goffman. *Forms of Talk.* pp. 78-122. Oxford: Blackwell.

Green, G. (1989) *Pragmatics and natural language understanding.* New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Grice, H.P. (1961) 'The causal theory of perception.' *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, Supplementary Volume 35:121-52

Grice, H.P. (1975) 'Logic and conversation.' In P. Cole & J. Morgan (eds.). *Syntax & Semantics 3: Speech Acts*. New York: Academic Press.

Grice, H.P. (1989) *Studies in the Way of Words*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Grundy, P. (1995) *Doing Pragmatics*. London: Edward Arnold.

Gutt, E-A. (2000) *Translation and Relevance*. Manchester: St Jerome Publishing.

Happé, F. (1993) 'Communicative competence and theory of mind in autism: a test of relevance theory.' *Cognition*, 48: 101-119.

Hare, R. M. (1970) 'Meaning and Speech Acts.' *Philosophical Review* 79:3-24.

Harley, T. (2001) *The psychology of language*. Hove: Psychology Press.

Harnish, R.M. (1976) 'Logical form and implicature.' In T. Bever, J. Katz & D.T. Langendoen. *An Integrated Theory of Linguistic Ability*. pp. 313-91. New York: Crowell.

Harnish, R.M. (1994) 'Mood, meaning and speech acts.' In S. Tsohatzidis. *Foundations of Speech-Act Theory.* pp. 407-459. London: Routledge.

Hayes, N. (1994) *Principles of comparative psychology*. Hove: Erlbaum.

Heim, I. (1983) 'File change semantics and the familiarity theory of definiteness'. In R Bauerle, U. Egli, and A. von Stechow (eds.) *Semantics from different points of view.* pp. 164-189. Berlin: Springer.

Hobbs, J. (1978) "Why is discourse coherent?" In F. Neubauer (ed.) *Coherence in natural language texts*. pp. 29-79. Hamburg: Buske.

Horn, L. R. (1984). 'Toward a new taxonomy for pragmatic inference: Q-based and R-based implicature.' In D. Schiffrin (Ed.). *Meaning, Form, and Use in Context: Linguistic Applications*. pp. 11-42. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press.

Horn, L. (1992) 'The said and unsaid.' *Ohio State University Working Papers in Linguistics (SALT II Proceedings)* 40:163-92.

Horn, L. (2004) 'Implicature.' In L. Horn & G. Ward. *The Handbook of Pragmatics.* Oxford: Blackwell.

Horn, L. & G. Ward (eds.) (2004) *The Handbook of Pragmatics.* Oxford: Blackwell.

Hugly, P. & Sayward, C. (1979) 'A problem about conversational implicature.' *Linguistics & Philosophy* 3: 19-25.

Huntley, M. (1984) 'The Semantics of English Imperatives.' *Linguistics and Philosophy* 7:103-33.

Karttunen, L. & S. Peters. (1975) 'Conventional implicature.' In Oh, C. & D. Dinneen (eds.). *Syntax and Semantics. Vol. 11: Presupposition*. 1-56. New York: Academic Press.

Kasher, A. (ed.) (1998) *Pragmatics: Critical Concepts*, vols. I-VI. London: Routledge.

Katz, J. J. (1972) *Semantic Theory*. New York: Harper and Row.

Keenan, E.O. (1976) 'On the universality of conversational implicatures.' *Language & Society* 5: 67-80.

Kempson, R. (1975) *Presupposition and the delimiation of semantics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Kempson, R. (1977) *Semantic theory*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Khalfa, J. (ed.) (1994) *What is intelligence?* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Kreuz, R. & S. Glucksberg (1989) 'How to be sarcastic: the echoic reminder theory of irony'. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General* 118: 374-86.

Kumon-Nakamura, S., S. Glucksberg & M. Brown (1995) 'How about another piece of pie: the allusional pretense theory of discourse irony'. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General* 124: 3-21.

Langdon, R., M. Davies, and M. Coltheart (2002) 'Understanding minds and understanding communicated meanings in schizophrenia.' *Mind and Language,* 17:68-104

Lascarides, A., A. Copestake and T. Briscoe (1996) 'Ambiguity and coherence.' *Journal of Semantics* 13: 41-66.

Levinson, S. (1983) *Pragmatics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Levinson, S. (1989) 'A review of *Relevance*.' *Journal of Linguistics* 25(2):455-72*.*

Levinson, S. (2000) *Presumptive meanings*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.

Livnat, Z. (2011) 'Quantity, truthfulness and ironic effect.' *Language Sciences* 33: 305-315.

Lyons, J. (1977) *Semantics. Vol. 2*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Lyons, J. (1995) *Linguistic Semantics.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Martin, R (1992) 'Irony and universe of discourse' *Lingua* 87: 77-90

Mey, J. (1993) *Pragmatics: An introduction*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Mey, J. & M. Talbot (1988) 'Computation and the soul.' *Journal of Pragmatics* 12: 743-89.

Morgan, J. & G. Green. (1987) 'On the search for relevance.' *Behavioral & Brain Sciences* 10.4: 726-7.

Neale, S. (1992) 'Paul Grice and the philosophy of language.' *Linguistics & Philosophy* 15.5: 509-59.

Noh, E-J. (1995) 'A pragmatic approach to echo questions.' *UCL Working papers in Linguistics* 7: 107-40.

Palmer, F. (1986) *Mood and Modality*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Piskorska, A. (2014) 'A relevance-theoretic perspective on humorous irony and its failure.' *Humor* 27(4): 661-85.

Preminger, A. (1975) *Princeton encyclopedia of poetry and poetics*. Macmillan, London.

Recanati, F. (1987) *Meaning and Force*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Recanati, F. (1989) 'The pragmatics of what is said.' *Mind and Language* 4:295-329.

Reyes, G. (1990) *La pragmática lingüística.* Barcelona: Montesinos.

Reyes, G. (1993) *Los procedimientos de cita: estilo directo y estilo indirecto*. Madrid: Arco Libros.

Reyes, G. (1994) *Los procedimientos de cita: citas encubiertas y ecos*. Madrid: Arco Libros.

Reyes, G. (1995): *El abecé de la pragmática*. Madrid: Arco Libros

Rosales Sequeiros, X. (2012) *Linguistic Meaning and Non-truth-conditionality*. Bern: Peter Lang.

Rouchota, V. and A.H. Jucker (eds.) (1998) *Current Issues in Relevance Theory*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Co.

Salmani Nodoushan, M. A. (2006a) 'A sociopragmatic comparative study of ostensible invitations in English and Farsi'. *Speech Communication, 48*(8): 903-912.

Salmani Nodoushan, M. A. (2006b). Greetings forms in English and Persian: A sociopragmatic perspective. *International Journal of Language, Culture, and Society, 17.* online.

Salmani Nodoushan, M. A. (2007a). 'Politeness markers in Persian requestives'. *The Linguistics Journal, 2*(1): 43-68.

Salmani Nodoushan, M. A. (2007b). 'Iranian complainees' use of conversational strategies: A politeness study'. *Iranian Journal of Language Studies, 1*(1): 29-56.

Salmani Nodoushan, M. A. (2007c). 'Conversational Strategies in Farsi Complaints: The Case of Iranian Complainers'. *PhiN: Philologie Netz, 39*: 20-37.

Salmani Nodoushan, M. A. (2008a). 'Conversational Strategies in Farsi Complaints: The Case of Iranian Complainees'. *International Journal of Language Studies, 2*(2): 187-214.

Salmani Nodoushan, M. A. (2008b). 'Persian requests: Redress of face through indirectness'. *Iranian Journal of Language Studies, 2*(3): 257-280.

Salmani Nodoushan, M. A. (2012). 'Rethinking face and politeness'. *International Journal of Language Studies, 6*(4): 119-140.

Salmani Nodoushan, M. A. (2013a). 'The social semiotics of funerary rites in Iran'. *International Journal of Language Studies, 7*(1): 79-102.

Salmani Nodoushan, M. A. (2013b). 'Review of Philosophical perspectives for pragmatics'. *Linguistik Online, 58*(1): 119-126.

Salmani Nodoushan, M. A. (2014a). 'Speech acts or language micro- and macro-games?' *International Journal of Language Studies, 8*(4): 1-28. (DOI: 10.13140/2.1.3699.2648)

Salmani Nodoushan, M. A. (2014b). 'Review of Perspectives on linguistic pragmatics.' *Intercultural Pragmatics, 11*(4): 645-649. (DOI: 10.1515/ip-2014-0028)

Salmani Nodoushan, M. A. (2014c). 'Review of Perspectives on pragmatics and philosophy.' *Intercultural Pragmatics, 11*(2): 301-306. (DOI: DOI 10.1515/ip-2014-0013)

Salmani Nodoushan, M. A. (2015a). 'Review of Intercultural pragmatics'. *Pragmatics & Society, 6*(1): 152–156. doi 10.1075/ps.6.1.08nod

Salmani Nodoushan, M. A. (2015b). 'The secret life of slurs from the perspective of reported speech.' *Rivista Italiana di Filosofia del Linguaggio, 9*(2): 92-112. (DOI 10.4396/201512204)

Salmani Nodoushan, M. A. (2016a). 'Persian speakers' use of refusal strategies across politeness systems'. *PhiN: Philologie Netz, 76*: 61-77.

Salmani Nodoushan, M. A. (2016b). 'Rituals of death as staged communicative acts and pragmemes'. In A. Capone & J. L. Mey (eds.), *Interdisciplinary Studies in Pragmatics, Culture and Society.* pp. 925-959. Heidelberg: Springer.

Salmani Nodoushan, M. A. (2016c). *An encyclopedic dictionary of research.* Tehran: Iranian Institute for Encyclopedia Research.

Salmani Nodoushan, M. A. (in press[a]). 'Which view of indirect reports do Persian data corroborate?'. *International Review of Pragmatics.*

Salmani Nodoushan, M. A. (in press[b]). 'On the functions of swearing in Persian'. *Journal of Language Aggression and Conflict.*

Salmani Nodoushan, M. A., & Allami, H. (2011). 'Supportive discourse moves in Persian requests'. *International Journal of Language Studies, 5*(2): 65-94.

Salmani Nodoushan, M. A., & Mohiyedin Ghomshei, G. R. (2014). 'Iconicity of cohesion in Persian causative constructions'. *Linguistik online 68*: 29-42.

Searle, J. R. (1969) *Speech acts*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Searle, J. R. (1979) *Expression and meaning*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Seuren, P. (1987) 'The self-styling of relevance theory.' *Journal of Semantics* 5: 123-43.

Sperber, D. (1984) 'Verbal irony: pretense or echoic mention.' *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General* 113: 130-6.

Sperber, D. (1994) 'Understanding verbal understanding.' In J. Khalfa. *What is intelligence?* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Sperber, D. & D. Wilson (1981) 'Irony and the use-mention distinction.' In P. Cole (ed) *Radical Pragmatics*. pp. 295-317. New York: Academic Press

Sperber, D. & D. Wilson (1987) 'Precis of *Relevance*.' *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 10(4):697-710.

Sperber, D. & D. Wilson (1990) 'Rhetoric and Relevance.' In J. Bender & D. Wellbery (eds.) *The end of rhetoric: history, theory, practice*. pp. 140-56. Stanford, Ca.: Stanford University Press.

Sperber, D.& D. Wilson (1991) 'Loose talk'. In S. Davis (ed.). *Pragmatics: A Reader*. pp. 540-9.

Sperber, D. & D. Wilson (1995 2nd edition) *Relevance: communication and Cognition*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Sperber, D. & D. Wilson (1998a) 'The mapping between the mental and the public lexicon'. In P. Carruthers & J. Boucher (eds.). pp. 184-200.

Sperber, D. & D. Wilson (1998b) 'Irony and relevance: A reply to Seto, Hamamoto and Yamanashi.' In R. Carston & S. Uchida (eds) *Relevance theory: Applications and implications*. Amsterdam: J. Benjamins.

Sperber, D. & D. Wilson (2002) 'Pragmatics, modularity and mindreading.' *Mind and Language* 17:3-23.

Swinney, D. (1979) 'Lexical access during sentence comprehension: (re) consideration of context effects.' *Journal of Verbal Learning and Verbal Behaviour* 18: 645-659.

Talbot, M. (1994) 'Relevance.' In A. Asher (ed.) *The Encyclopedia of Language and Linguistics,* vol. 7: 3524-3527. Oxford: Pergamon.

Tsohatzidis, S. (ed.). (1994) *Foundations of Speech-Act Theory. Philosophical and Linguistic Perspectives.* London: Routledge.

Ward, G. & J. Hirschberg (1991) 'A pragmatic analysis of tautological utterances.' *Journal of Pragmatics* 15: 507-20.

Wharton, T. (2001) 'Natural pragmatics and natural codes.' *UCL Working Papers in Linguistics* 13: 109-158.

Wharton T. (2002) 'Paul Grice, saying and meaning.' *UCL Working Papers in Linguistics* 14: 207-248.

Wilson, D. (1992) 'Reference and relevance.' *UCL Working Papers in Linguistics* 4, 167-91.

Wilson, D. (1993a) 'Varieties of non-truth-conditional meaning,' MS.

Wilson, D. (1993b) 'Philosophy of Language.' Lecture Notes 1993-1994. Dept. of Linguistics, University College London. MS.

Wilson, D. (1994a) 'Relevance and Understanding'. In Gillian Brown et al (eds*.) Language and Understanding*. pp. 35-58. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Wilson, D. (1994b) 'Discourse markers: Social and cognitive approaches.' Ms.

Wilson, D. (1995) 'Is there a maxim of truthfulness?' *UCL Working Papers in Linguistics* 7: 197-212.

Wilson, D. (1998) 'Linguistic structure and inferential communication.' In *Proceedings of the 16th International Congress of Linguists.*

Wilson, D. (1999) 'Metarepresentation in linguistic communication.' *UCL Working Papers in Linguistics 11*: 127-61.

Wilson, D. (2000) 'Metarepresentation in Linguistic Communication.' In D. Sperber (ed.), *Metarepresentations: A Multidisciplinary Perspective.* pp. 411-448. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Wilson, D. (2003a) 'Semantic Theory.' Lecture Notes 2003-2004. Dept. of Linguistics, University College London. MS.

Wilson, D. (2003b) 'Relevance and lexical pragmatics.' *Italian Journal of Linguistics/Rivista di Linguistica* 15.2: 273-291*.*

Wilson, D. (2005) 'New directions for research on pragmatics and modularity.' *Lingua* 115: 1129-1146*.*

Wilson, D. (2006a) 'Irony, echo and pretence.' *Lingua* 116: 1722-1743.

Wilson, D. (2006b) 'Pragmatic Theory.' Lectures 1-10. UCL Department of Linguistics.

Wilson, D.& T. Matsui (1998) 'Recent approaches to bridging: Truth, coherence, relevance.' *UCL Working Papers in Linguistics* 10: 173-200.

Wilson, D. & D. Sperber (1979) 'Ordered entailments: an alternative to presuppositional Theories.' In C.K. Oh & D. Dineen (eds.) *Syntax and Semantics 11: Presupposition.* pp. 229-324. New York: Academic Press.

Wilson, D. & D. Sperber (1988a) 'Mood and the analysis of Non-declarative Sentences.' In J. Dancy et al (eds.). pp. 77-101.

Wilson, D. & D. Sperber (1988b) 'Representation and relevance.' In R. Kempson (ed.) *Mental Representations: the interface between language and reality.* pp.133-53. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Wilson, D. & D. Sperber (1992) 'On verbal irony.' *Lingua* 87:53-76.

Wilson, D. & D. Sperber (1993a) 'Linguistic form and relevance.' *Lingua* 90:1-25.

Wilson, D. & D. Sperber (1993b) 'Relevance and time.' *UCL Working Papers in Linguistics 5*.: 277-298.

Wilson, D. & D. Sperber (1994) 'Varieties of non-truth-conditional meaning.' MS.

Wilson, D. & D. Sperber (2002) 'Truthfulness and relevance.' *Mind* 111: 583-632.

Wilson, D. & D. Sperber (2004) 'Relevance theory.' In G. Ward & L. Horn *Handbook of Pragmatics.* Blackwell, Oxford.

Yus, F. (1998) 'A decade of Relevance Theory.' *Journal of Pragmatics* 30:304-45.