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Introduction

Little Words: Communication and procedural meaning

Diane Blakemore's pioneering work on the interactions between linguistic form and inferential comprehension mechanisms has had a major influence on the development of Relevance Theory (Sperber and Wilson, 1986/1995; Blakemore, 1992, 2004, 2013; Carston, 2002; Wilson and Sperber, 2012; Clark, 2013). Her main research is at the interface of semantics and pragmatics, where her books *Semantic Constraints on Relevance* (1987) and *Relevance and Meaning* (2002) have made ground-breaking contributions to the study of non-truth-conditional meaning and its role in communication. She is best known for her distinction between conceptual and procedural meaning, and in particular for the notion of procedural meaning, which has been fruitfully applied not only to linguistic constructions in many languages (Brockway, 1981; Blakemore, 1988, 1989, 2000, 2007b; Blass, 1989, 1990; Matsui, 2002; Iten, 2005; Hall, 2007; Sasamoto, 2008; Unger, 2012) but also to non-verbal communication in humans and animals (Wharton, 2003, 2009). The aim of this Special Issue is to honour her work with a collection of papers by colleagues, collaborators and students. The title 'Little Words' echoes a description Diane sometimes jokingly gives of her own research; the subtitle 'Communication and procedural meaning', along with the range of papers collected here, seems to us to give a clearer idea of the originality and diversity of her work.

Diane's research on the effects of linguistic form on utterance interpretation sprang from her interest in a group of discourse connectives (e.g. *but, so, also, moreover*) which resist analysis in conceptual terms and are generally seen as non-truth-conditional. She proposed to analyse these as encoding not concepts that figure directly in the proposition expressed by an utterance but procedural ''instructions'' to the hearer about how the utterance is to be understood (for instance, what type of contextual assumptions should be used in processing it, and what type of conclusions should be drawn). This approach has since been fruitfully applied to a wide range of items – discourse particles, interjections, mood indicators, pronouns, expressives, etc. – which also resist analysis in purely conceptual terms and which tend to be seen as having little in common with each other in standard approaches to semantics or sociolinguistics (Clark, 1993; Wilson and Sperber, 1988, 1993; Matsui, 2000; Powell, 2010; Escandell-Vidal et al., 2011). Throughout her research, Diane has shown that these 'little words' can be fruitfully approached in terms of a unitary, cognitively grounded notion of procedural meaning. This has had particular implications for linguistic semantics, by showing how a wide range of apparently disparate phenomena might be brought within its scope.

Diane's work on the conceptual–procedural distinction, with its implications for the interface between linguistic semantics and pragmatics, has opened up new perspectives on other aspects of language use, in particular prosody and style (Blakemore, 1991, 1993, 1994, 1996, 1997, 2005, 2006, 2007a, 2009; Gutt, 1991; Noh, 2000; Papafragou, 2000; Ifantidou, 2001; Blakemore and Carston, 2005; Unger, 2006; Clark, 2009, 2012; Blakemore and Gallai, 2014; Jodlowiec, 2015; Walaszewska, 2015). Together with other relevance theorists who have worked on non-verbal communication (e.g. Wilson and Wharton, 2006; Wharton, 2009; Chevallier et al., 2011), she has provided interesting analyses of a range of cases that are generally seen as 'para-linguistic' or 'stylistic', and therefore as falling outside the scope of linguistics proper. On this approach, procedural ''instructions'' can be carried not only by linguistic expressions but also by non-linguistic cues, so that, for instance, affective prosody may be analysed in procedural terms, and subtle variations in linguistic form (e.g. the use of parentheticals, appositives and expressives) may be seen as contributing to inferential comprehension in ways that are hard to analyse in purely conceptual terms (Blakemore, 2008, 2010, 2011, 2015).

One of the strengths of Diane's work comes from her eye for real data. As noted above, her work has always been cognitively oriented and theory based, but she is also constantly alert to evidence from all sorts of places – literature,

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overheard comments, billboards, radio, road signs, films, TV, posters – belying the common criticism of work on relevance theory that it 'does not deal with real examples'. One of the best-known illustrations of this was her discussion of 'Dogs must be carried', which was taken from a sign on the London Underground. Importantly, she has been as much concerned with examples which are *not* acceptable in certain contexts as with those which are: as she often says, without knowing when certain expressions are not acceptable, we could not explain when they are.

Diane's work has been widely recognized in academia. In the last ten years, she has won distinguished Senior Research Fellowships from both the British Academy and the Leverhulme Trust, which have enabled her to extend her investigations to many further aspects of the relationship between pragmatics and style. Her service to the Linguistics community includes many years as an editor of *Lingua*, and as a member of the advisory board of *Mind and Language*. She has lectured widely in the UK and abroad, including Japan, the Netherlands, France, Switzerland, Spain, Poland and the United States.

Diane's contribution to Linguistics does not stop at her own research; she has also had a significant influence on fellow linguists. Having completed her PhD on the semantics-pragmatics interface at University College London under the supervision of Deirdre Wilson, she became a Lecturer and Senior Lecturer in Linguistics at the University of Southampton before moving north to the University of Salford, where she took up the Chair of Linguistics in 1998 and later became Director of its European Studies Research Institute. Under her leadership, the University of Salford developed a new programme in Linguistics which achieved top place in the National Student Survey in 2008. This programme added new theoretical depth to the School of Languages at Salford, which had previously been heavily oriented towards applied research, and her breadth of experience and expertise helped to build up a department with a unique combination of researchers in linguistics, language studies and translation/interpreting studies. Diane also helped to set up the North West Centre for Linguistics (NWCL), which provides research training in theoretical and applied linguistics and research methodology for graduate students.

Diane has supervised a number of young researchers working on a wide range of topics, from Japanese discourse connectives to simile, repetition and interpreting. Her commitment to teaching and supervision has been remarkable, and her students are extremely grateful for her dedication to mentoring new researchers and her 'fine-tooth comb' approach to supervision, which fostered their independence as researchers in academia. She provided them with guidance, never answers, which they still find very insightful several years later. As one of her former students says, 'She has an intuition for what is and what isn't going to be pertinent to theoretical work, and the breadth of her expertise in the field is awe-inspiring'.

The papers in this special issue give a good idea of Diane's contributions to the field. They start and end with two general reflections on the development and future prospects of the conceptual–procedural distinction: a Prologue by Deirdre Wilson ('Reassessing the conceptual–procedural distinction') and an Epilogue by Robyn Carston ('The heterogeneity of procedural meaning'). The remaining papers fall into two broad groups. The first group explores the relation between the conceptual–procedural distinction and the creation of expressive or poetic effects: Tim Wharton on the analysis of expressives ('That bloody so-and-so has retired – Expressives revisited'); Ryoko Sasamoto and Rebecca Jackson on onomatopoeia ('Onomatopoeia – Showing word or saying word? Relevance theory, lexis and the communication of impressions'); Adam Gargani on the relation between simile, metaphor and literal comparisons ('Similes as poetic comparisons'), and Kate Scott on the effects of the use of pronouns that go beyond merely securing reference ('Pronouns: Reference and beyond'). The second group explores the broader implications of the conceptual–procedural distinction: Tomoko Matsui and her colleagues report some experiments on the acquisition of procedural expressions ('Young children's early sensitivity to indications of speaker certainty in their selective word learning'; Fabrizio Gallai analyses the omission and addition of discourse connectives by simultaneous interpreters ('Point of view in free indirect thought and in community interpreting'); Jacques Moeschler presents an alternative account of the conceptual–procedural distinction which has been widely used in analyses of French ('Where is procedural meaning located? Evidence from discourse connectives and tenses'); and Billy Clark explores the implications of the conceptual–procedural distinction for language change ('Relevance theory and language change').

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