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Preface

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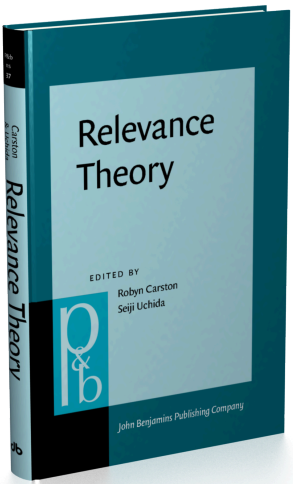

Pages ix–x of
Relevance Theory: Applications and implications
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Preface

The publication in 1986 of *Relevance: Communication and Cognition* by Dan Sperber and Deirdre Wilson set in motion a wide-ranging programme of research into human communication, to which the papers in this volume are intended to contribute. The second edition of *Relevance* appeared at the end of 1995 with a new Postface written by the authors in which the main developments in the theory since the first edition are surveyed and some revisions are suggested.

The theory's origins are European, but Japanese scholars and students were among the first to appreciate its explanatory potential. Many Japanese students have come to London over the past decade to pursue this interest and they have made important contributions to the theory. This involvement culminated in the publication of the Japanese translation of *Relevance* in 1993. The translators were Seiji Uchida, Toshiaki Nakatsuji, Nam Sun Song and Keiko Tanaka. To coincide with this publication a conference was held in Osaka, 29-30 May 1993, entitled "New Perspectives from Relevance Theory", and this volume is the outcome of that meeting. All the speakers at the conference have produced a written up version of their talks and these are gathered together here. The breadth and richness of relevance theory is represented, both in its **applications** to problems of utterance interpretation, that fall squarely within the domain of pragmatics, and its **implications** for linguistic semantics.

The relevance-theoretic view of communication, and hence of pragmatics, is, first and foremost, cognitive in its orientation, which distinguishes it from, on the one hand, pragmatic theories developed within logical approaches to natural language, and, on the other hand, those socially based accounts which bypass mental representations and processes. The cognitive concepts and distinctions, which lie at the heart of the theory, in particular 'processing effort' and 'cognitive effects', have proved hugely enabling in the bid to develop satisfactory accounts of a wide range of pragmatic phenomena. We think this is demonstrated by the collection of papers in this volume.

Central pragmatic issues addressed here include a relevance-driven account of scalar implicature, the role of bridging implicatures in reference assignment, the derivation of different temporal interpretations, the way in which different intonation patterns contribute to the relevance of an utterance, and the application of the theory to literary texts. The recently developed semantic distinction between conceptually and procedurally encoded meaning, motivated by relevance-theoretic considerations, is employed in new accounts of several Japanese particles and in a fresh perspective on the phenomenon of metalinguistic negation. The final session

of the conference was a symposium on irony and other tropes, in which aspects of the relevance-theoretic treatments of these, involving the concepts of interpretive use and echoic use, were assessed and compared with other work in these areas. These papers are presented together at the end, with a new reply from Dan Sperber and Deirdre Wilson.

We had considered writing a short summary of the theory but decided that that would be a needless duplication, given that there are a number of clear outlines already in existence and several of the papers in the volume include exposition of parts of the theory relevant to their topic. Instead, we provide a glossary of key technical terms, most of which occur in one or more of the papers, which we hope may help to remind the reader where necessary, and we recommend the following as good introductions for anyone new to the theory: Diane Blakemore's relevance-theoretic textbook, *Understanding Utterances: An Introduction to Pragmatics*, (Blackwell: Oxford, 1992), and Deirdre Wilson's paper, 'Relevance and understanding' in G. Brown et al. (1994) *Language and Understanding*, (Oxford University Press: Oxford).

We would like to thank the Osaka University of Economics and Law, whose financial support was essential in enabling the conference to take place; members of the university, in particular Nam Sun Song, extended marvellous hospitality to all of the participants. We are grateful to Keiko Tanaka, who did a great deal of organisational and communicative work at both ends, Osaka and London, to ensure the smooth running of the meeting and the well-being of those who came from abroad. The process of converting the papers for this volume to camera-ready form was greatly eased by the help of Ichiro Akano.

Last, and most, we wish to thank Dan Sperber and Deirdre Wilson, who gave their time and attention unstintingly to the participants of the workshop and who have continued to support us generously in our work in putting these papers together for publication. We are especially delighted that they made time to write an extra piece, a reply to some of the questions raised by participants in the symposium. We hope that in contemplating this volume they will find the effort they have expended has not been without effect.

July 1997

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