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# Some remarks on non-conceptual word meaning and truth-conditional content in Robyn Carston's pragmatics

## 1. Introduction

[A]n account of word meanings as non-conceptual (semantically underspecified) would be the completing component of this view of the relation between language and thought: not only do sentence meanings underdetermine thought, but the basic constituents of sentences (words) underdetermine the basic constituents of thoughts (concepts). If this account turns out to be right, it's not just that we don't always say what we intend our hearers to take us to mean but that it is simply not possible to say what we mean. (Carston, 2013, p. 203)

Over the last two decades Relevance Theory (Sperber and Wilson, 1986 [1995]; Wilson and Sperber, 2004) has undergone fundamental changes.<sup>1</sup> Robyn Carston's contribution has been substantial. Her latest proposals (Carston, 2013, 2012) focusing on the interpretation of standing word meaning<sup>2</sup> seem to lead to even more revolutionary reconstruction of the theory.

There are two goals to be achieved in this paper. The first one is expository: to show how stable, conventionalized word meaning has been interpreted in Relevance Theory, and, more specifically, whether and, if so, how word meaning contributes to the truth-conditional content of explicatures.

The second goal is discursive. It seems that Carston's view that word meaning is non-conceptual and non-semantic but schematic and not determinate is not compatible with the basic assumptions of Relevance Theory because it requires a redefinition of logical form, explicature, and logical form development. It also needs clarification of the nature of schematic word meaning, of concepts constituting explicature and of the relation between the two.

## 2. From concepts to concept schemas

The canonical RT view on word meaning is similar to the minimalist semantic position<sup>3</sup> (Carston, 2013, p. 196), according to which word meanings are concepts and concepts have a referential semantics (Carston, 2012; Wilson and Carston, 2007). Wilson (2003, p. 274) writes that she "will adopt a simple model of linguistic

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1 For example, from syntax-semantics-pragmatics to syntax-pragmatics distinction, from linguistic semantics to lexical pragmatics, from concepts understood as stable elementary mental structures to occasion-specific ad hoc concepts and many more.

2 More precisely, of nouns, verbs and adjectives meaning. Referring to word meaning in the paper is restricted to the meaning of these three open-class parts of speech.

3 See page 8.

semantics<sup>4</sup> that treats words as encoding mentally-represented concepts [. . .], which constitute their linguistic meaning and determine what might be called their linguistically specified denotation” (Carston, 2013, p. 196). Within this broad view (Sperber and Wilson, 2008), “majority of open-class words encode concepts, which have a denotation, an externalist semantics, and so contribute directly to truth-conditional content” (Carston, 2013, pp. 195–196). It follows that words encode concepts, constituting a minimalist mental lexicon: mappings from lexical items to simple concepts (Carston, 2013, pp. 178, 180).

Concepts are mental representational entities of the Fodorian (1998) type<sup>5</sup> (Carston, 2013, p. 185). They are basic constituents of our language of thought, each of which is a storage point for encyclopaedic information. These are their two functions in our cognitive life. Concepts have a referential semantics, that is, they have a denotation: they refer to entities, properties and activities in the mind-external world.

Within RT lexical pragmatics (Wilson, 2003; Wilson and Carston, 2007; Sperber and Wilson, 2008), word meaning is pragmatically inferred on top of being encoded. “All words behave as if they encoded pro-concepts, that is [. . .] the concept it is used to convey in a given utterance has to be contextually worked out” (Sperber and Wilson 1998 [2012], p. 195). As a result of this pragmatic inference, ad hoc concepts may be constructed (or retrieved). They are occasion-specific and understood in denotational terms (their denotation is narrower and/or broader than the denotation of the concept encoded by a word triggering ad hoc concept construction).<sup>6</sup> Within RT lexical pragmatics “the pragmatic process of inferring the intended content is optional because ‘it may so happen that the intended concept is the very one encoded by the word’ (Sperber and Wilson, 1998, p. 197 [2012])” (Carston, 2013, p. 185).

At this state of word meaning interpretation “the overall picture of (encoded) word meaning in RT is quite heterogeneous: procedures of various sorts, pro-concepts and concepts (denotational entities) all of which provide input to the pragmatic interpretation process, and all of which, concepts included, function merely as clues or evidence guiding and constraining processes of pragmatic inference whose goal is the recovery of the intended interpretation of the utterance” (Carston, 2013, p. 196).

The main theses of Carston’s (2013, 2012) pragmatics, concerning the stable/standing meaning of three open-class items, that is nouns, verbs and adjectives are as follows:

- a) Stable (lexicalized) word meanings are non-conceptual, that is non-semantic (Carston, 2013, p. 184). Words do not encode full-fledged concepts; in fact, there is no literal, encoded meaning of lexical items (Carston, 2013, p. 200). As in RT lexical pragmatics, words are merely pointers to or evidence for a speaker’s meaning.
- b) “Each word comes with its own distinct but schematic meaning, which functions as a constraint on the general pragmatic process of accessing or constructing a concept, a process which is wholly motivated by the goal of the pragmatic system which is to

4 Originally in RT (Sperber and Wilson 1986 [1995]; Carston, 1991) a certain division of labour was assumed between linguistic semantics and truth-conditional semantics. With the emergence of the RT lexical pragmatics, the role of the former has gradually disappeared.

5 Full-fledged, non-decompositional atomic concepts with no content-construction inferential connection or knowledge structures.

6 For a critical view on RT ad hoc concepts see, among others, Mioduszevska (in press).

deliver speaker meaning” (Carston, 2013, p. 200). The problem is what would be the lexical concept that comprises the stable meaning of a word whose use gives rise to a range of distinct ad hoc concepts. For example, is there any definite thought at all that engages the general concept encoded by the verb *open* (Carston, 2012, 2013, p. 185), covering all its distinct senses (*open the door, open one's mouth, open a meeting...*)? Perhaps it is better “to move to a different non-conceptual (non-semantic) view on the nature of standing word meaning” (Carston, 2013, p. 185).

- c) In view of the schematic, non-conceptual stable meaning of open-class words, the pragmatic inferential process of constructing (contextual) ad hoc concepts becomes obligatory (Carston 2013, p. 187). This process allows for only one of a range of concepts to be the first one accessed or constructed, as determined by considerations of relevance.
- d) Word meanings are conceptually underspecified (Carston, 2013, pp. 184, 187, 196, 197, 201).<sup>7</sup>
- e) Meaning  $\neq$  sense. Open-class items meaning is the underspecified, non-conceptual, non-semantic standing meaning of a word. Open-class items senses are fully conceptual semantic entities that words are used to express by individual language users in their individual utterances. Speakers express fully semantic entities, that is concepts, components of the thoughts/propositions expressed (Carston, 2013, p. 201).<sup>8</sup>
- f) This non-conceptual view of word meaning is compatible with RT.<sup>9</sup>

According to Carston, her interpretation of standing word meaning has some cognitive and theoretical advantages. On the processing effort side, “rather than activating one or more specific senses, readers initially activate a single, semantically underspecified meaning. This abstract meaning is the same for the established senses of a word, that is, the same underspecified meaning encompasses all semantically related interpretations of a word that are known to a reader” (Frisson as cited in Carston, 2013, pp. 191–192).

On this account, there is no need to explicate the nature and functioning of full-fledged concepts. On the other hand, an explanation is offered of the fact that bundles of related senses (polysemy) seem to accrue around a word form (Carston, 2013, p. 200).

The account faces some problems too. The most important one boils down to the question how one gets from non-conceptual, non-semantic word meaning to semantic, truth-conditional, and conceptual word senses (Carston, 2013, pp. 187, 195 note 20). Another concerns the organization and tagging of encyclopaedic information (Carston, 2013, p. 180).

7 The proof of underdeterminacy of standing word meaning comes from an analysis of polysemy (Bosch, 2009) and its cognitive foundations (Frisson, 2009) endorsed by Carston. Since all open-class words are (potentially) polysemous (Carston, 2013, p. 192), their meaning is underspecified, too. For the needs of this article, the validity of the reasoning is irrelevant, as what is examined is the (in)compatibility of Carston's view with the general RT assumptions.

8 External support for this position comes, for example, from Bosch (2009, p. 99) in Carston (2013, p. 185) “Lexical semantics is much less specified than is often assumed and only contains structural constraints over the kind of conceptual entities that can be denoted by the lexical item, but does not contain the conceptual content.”

9 To support this claim, Carston (2013, pp. 198–199) discusses Wilson's (2011) proposal that all words encode a procedural meaning while open classes also encode concepts, advocating her own view.

A lot more needs to be said about the nature and functioning of postulated non-conceptual, non-truth-conditional but word invariant concept schemas to make them cognitively and operationally transparent. Similarly, the status and properties of full-fledged mental concepts cannot be left unexplained because, although they are no longer needed as word meanings, they remain constitutive components of speakers' thoughts (propositions expressed), which are the meaning of explicatures. Since thoughts are fully propositional, semantic, conceptual, and truth-conditional, Fodor's (1998) requirement of semantic compositionality, according to Carston no longer valid for language meaning in her pragmatics, seems to remain necessary for the language of thought. This aspect has not been clarified in the presented account.

### 3. Truth-conditional content in Relevance Theory

In relating her view on standing word meaning to truth-conditional semantics, Carston juxtaposes minimalist semantics (Borg, 2012; Bach, 1994, 2010) to her own view, with the original RT interpretation (Sperber and Wilson, 1986 [1995]; Wilson and Sperber, 2004) surfacing only occasionally.

According to Bach's version of effability thesis, "all our thoughts are explicitly expressible, in which case for every thought there is at least one sentence that would express it explicitly" (Bach, 2010, p. 129). Consequently, competent speakers can always say exactly what they mean. This is possible on the assumption of minimalist, externalist referential semantics explicating word and sentence standing meaning. In this view, natural language sentences have a truth-conditional semantics, that is, well-formed declarative sentences semantically express propositions. A hearer's grasp of an utterance's truth-conditions is achieved with minimal, if any, reliance on context. Words are context insensitive and their standing meaning makes a direct contribution to truth-conditional content. "Word meanings are concepts and it is these concepts which stand in relation to objects in the world. Words have their content given by things in the world" (Borg, 2012, p. 144). In this way, open-class items contribute a determinate denotation to the truth-conditional content of sentences (Carston, 2013, pp. 194–195).

In the canonical form of RT (Sperber and Wilson, 1986 [1995]; Wilson and Sperber, 2004), truth-conditional semantics was "responsible" for the meaning of thoughts expressed in explicatures and, consequently, for the meaning of the latter. Explicatures have constituted primary component of speaker meaning, derived from minimal linguistic content (encoded meaning explicable in terms of linguistic semantics) via pragmatic enrichment and adjustment in a given context. The explicitness of so derived explicature meaning comes in degrees (Carston, 2013, p. 177). Pragmatic enrichment and adjustment consist in pragmatic inference based on premises coming from beliefs, intentions, encyclopaedic information (and, thus, not only from associative mappings and concept activation). Only intended contextual assumptions enter the interpretation process (Carston, 2013, p. 178). The automatic decoding process results in the (tacit) recovery of logical form (LF)/semantic representation (SR) of a sentence, which is a syntactically structured string of atomic ("primitive") concepts.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Concepts are accessed via word-concept mappings (Sperber and Wilson 1986 [1995]).

In Carston's account, the effability thesis collapses: "There are always components of a speaker's meaning which the linguistic expressions she employs do not encode" (Carston, 2013, p. 202). Full explicitness/encoding/expressibility of content is generally not achievable, if not for any other reason than because of the underdeterminacy thesis (Carston, 2002a).<sup>11</sup> Another reason is that linguistically given meaning is schematic and non-propositional. It only provides evidence and/or constraint on propositional content speakers communicate (Carston, 2013, p. 177). Word meaning is not a conceptual, denotational entity. Consequently, sentences do not encode thoughts/propositions and their meaning is non-truth-conditional.<sup>12</sup> If sentences are not truth-conditional, only one requirement on word meaning is left: "that those word meanings are constant whenever they occur in a linguistic representation"<sup>13</sup> (Carston, 2013, p. 188). In fact, no single level of meaning can serve as both sentence semantics and speaker-meant primary meaning (Carston, 2013, pp. 176–177). Carston's pragmatics is compatible with Recanati's (1994, 2004) contextualism, in contradiction to semantic minimalism and effability thesis (Carston, 2002b; Sperber and Wilson, 1986 [1995], 2012).

Truth-conditional semantics does not play any role in the description of language meaning. It is assumed to give us the meaning of explicatures, that is, of the thoughts expressed by the speaker. Carston does not explain how exactly, if at all, it may happen. Speaker's thoughts, that is the meaning of explicatures, are truth-conditional (propositional), conceptual, semantic and determinate. How can it be possible if there is no way to get from schematic, non-conceptual, non-truth-conditional language meaning to conceptual speaker meaning? What is the status and nature of such ad hoc atomic concepts and how can they contribute to the truth-conditional meaning of the thought expressed by the speaker, subject to the principle of compositionality, if their denotations may be not determinable and they may have no logical entries?

Carston claims that her account of standing word meaning is compatible with the general assumptions of Relevance Theory. It seems, however, that some fundamental questions should be answered first.

#### 4. Robyn Carston's non-conceptual word meaning and Relevance Theory

In Relevance Theory the process of understanding utterances triggered by the two principles of relevance<sup>14</sup> is claimed to follow the relevance-theoretic comprehension heuristic:

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- 11 "The meaning encoded in the linguistic expression type that a speaker utters inevitably underdetermines the content that the communicator [conveys], not only her implicatures but also the propositional content she communicates explicitly ('explicature')" (Carston 2010, 4, 2009, 2002a).
  - 12 Consequently, the principle of compositionality does not apply to language (Carston, 2013, p. 187).
  - 13 Carston (2013, p. 188) claims that this requirement can be met even if word meanings are underspecified and non-conceptual, but she does not explain how this could be achieved (see pages 13, 14).
  - 14 "Cognitive Principle of Relevance: Human cognition tends to be geared to the maximization of relevance" (Wilson and Sperber, 2004, p. 610). "Communicative Principle of Relevance: Every ostensive stimulus conveys a presumption of its own optimal relevance" (Wilson and Sperber, 2004, p. 612).

Relevance-theoretic comprehension procedure: a. Follow a path of least effort in computing cognitive effects. Test interpretive hypotheses (disambiguation, reference resolution, implicatures, etc.) in order of accessibility. b. Stop when your expectations of relevance<sup>15</sup> are satisfied (or abandoned). (Wilson and Sperber, 2004, p. 613)

Subtasks in the overall comprehension process: a. Constructing an appropriate hypothesis about explicit content (EXPLICATURES) via decoding, disambiguation, reference resolution and other pragmatic enrichment processes. b. Constructing an appropriate hypothesis about the intended contextual assumptions (IMPLICATED PREMISES). c. Constructing an appropriate hypothesis about the intended contextual implications (IMPLICATED CONCLUSIONS). (Wilson and Sperber, 2004, p. 615)

The changes introduced to Relevance Theory by Carston in her papers “Word meaning and concept expressed” (2012) and “Word meaning, what is said and explicature” (2013) concern the (a) subtask of the RT comprehension heuristic, that is, explicature construction via decoding, disambiguation, relevance resolution and other pragmatic enrichment processes.

In the canonical version of RT, explicature construction has been described in many papers. On hearing a speaker’s utterance U, the hearer, driven by the principles of relevance and guided by the relevance-theoretic comprehension procedure, tries to recover the communicated thought, that is, the speaker’s meaning. The thought is the truth-conditional meaning of the explicature of the utterance.<sup>16</sup> Explicature is a development of a logical form encoded by an utterance (Sperber and Wilson, 1986 [1995, p. 82]). Logical forms, as already mentioned, are structured sets of atomic concepts, potentially undergoing individual-relative pragmatic adjustment (Carston, 2010). “[T]he hearer takes the conceptual structure constructed by linguistic decoding (logical form), [. . .] he enriches this on the explicit level and complements it at the implicit level (guided by the cognitive principle of relevance)” (Sperber and Wilson, 1998 [2012, p. 39]). The automatic decoding process is the first subtask<sup>17</sup> in explicature construction, comprising semantically/linguistically encoded meaning (Carston, 2009, 2010). The resulting logical form, being a starting point for its development into explicature, is conceptual in nature.

In RT, concepts are “enduring, elementary mental structures, capable of playing different discriminatory or inferential roles on different occasions in an individual’s mental life” (Sperber and Wilson, 1998 [2012, p. 13]). They are accessed via words through three entries (addresses in memory): lexical, logical, and encyclopaedic. Logical entries for concepts contain inference rules constituting truth-conditional semantic content of the concepts.

15 “Relevance of an input is defined as a) Other things being equal, the greater the positive cognitive effects achieved by processing an input, the greater the relevance of the input to the individual at that time. b) Other things being equal, the greater the processing effort expended, the lower the relevance of the input to the individual at that time” (Wilson and Sperber, 2004, p. 609).

“Presumption of optimal relevance: a) The ostensive stimulus is relevant enough to be worth the audience’s processing effort. b) It is the most relevant one compatible with communicator’s abilities and preferences” (Wilson and Sperber, 2004, p. 612).

16 The content of explicatures, or rather thoughts expressed by them is truth-conditional in character (Carston, 1991, 2004).

17 Utterance comprehension consists in online processing; individual subtasks are not sequential, but parallel.

The rules are similar in the outcome of their application to meaning postulates. On the one hand, the meaning of a concept is given by those content constitutive inference rules and, on the other, the concept's meaning is its denotation. This denotation is inherited by the word encoding the concept as its meaning. In the case of open-class items, there is a simple mapping from lexical forms to mental atomic concepts (Carston, 2010, pp. 8–9). Concepts may be shared by interlocutors, or they may be individual-relative and potentially non-communicable. They are arrived at through mutual pragmatic adjustment of explicatures and contextual implications (Carston, 2010, p. 10).

In the relevance-search driven process of free pragmatic enrichment, ad hoc concepts (marked with \*) can be constructed or retrieved (Carston, 2002b, 2010). As already mentioned, they are “pragmatically derived, generally ineffable, non-lexicalized [. . .] rough indication to aid readers in understanding what we have in mind in particular cases” (Carston, 2010, p. 13). The meaning of ad hoc concepts is their denotation. They may be relatively stable and retrieved from interlocutors' memory. Such stable ad hoc concepts could have logical entries and could contribute to the truth-conditional content of explicatures. Truly occasion-specific ad hoc concepts are constructed on the spur of the moment and their denotation may be not determinable. Consequently, they could not contribute to the truth-conditional content of explicit meaning.

The meaning of an explicature of an utterance, that is, the meaning of the thought expressed by the speaker in the utterance is the outcome of the utterance's logical form development. The result is truth-conditional and propositional in character. The explicature's propositional form is “a well-formed formula which (a) undergoes formal logical operations determined by its structure and (b) is semantically complete in that it is capable of being true or false” (Carston, 1991, p. 49).

Formal truth-conditional semantics operates on propositional forms. If no definite propositional form is recoverable, formal truth-conditional semantics does not have anything to operate on. The truth-conditionality of explicature meaning is possible because of its conceptual character. The concepts result from (equally conceptual) logical form development. To secure truth-conditionality, the concepts, constituting explicature meaning, should have determinable denotations and, preferably, logical entries providing grounding for truth-conditions. In the canonical RT version, these conditions can be met.

In Carston's pragmatics, the situation is radically different. The divergences concern the nature of decoding, interpretation of logical form and its development, the character of mental ad hoc concepts constituting explicatures and explicature meaning in general. All of them stem from the main assumption of Carston's pragmatics, according to which words do not encode concepts (so no lexicalized concepts are allowed) because the schematic invariant word meaning, which is not open to pragmatic modifications and adjustments and the nature of which has not been explicated yet, is non-conceptual and non-truth-conditional.

In RT, logical forms are structured strings of concepts, resulting from the automatic process of decoding the verbal input (prototypically in one's native tongue). In view of Carston's new understanding of standing word meaning, this interpretation of logical form is inadmissible for lack of lexicalized concepts. It is difficult to predict what changes in

RT would have to be introduced before a different account of the decoding process and the resulting logical form character compatible with Carston's pragmatics is introduced.

With the changing character of logical form, the process of its development would also have to be modified. No individual-relative modulations or adjustments of the decoded concepts can take place as there are no concepts on which they could work. As Carston herself admits (2013, pp. 197, 195 note 20), the greatest problem is how to get from the invariant, non-conceptual, non-truth-conditional standing word meaning (which has not yet become part of logical form and is not claimed to surface in the decoding process) to individual-relative, conceptual, truth-conditional meaning of ad hoc concepts constituting the meaning of explicatures. Until this question is answered, no logical form development can be postulated. Since the only operational definition of explicature in RT is that it is a result of logical form development,<sup>18</sup> the existence of explicatures cannot be predicted, either. Disregarding for a moment the question of how one can get an explicature of an utterance otherwise than in the process of logical form development, we might speculate on the nature of explicature in the situation when words do not encode concepts and the process of ad hoc concepts construction is obligatory. Then, explicatures would be composed of such occasion-specific ad hoc concepts, constructed on the basis of words invariant schematic standard meaning and contextual premises, as guided by the principles of relevance but not necessarily the (a) subtask of the relevance-theoretic comprehension heuristic. The question then arises what would be the meaning of ad hoc concepts so constructed.

In RT the meaning of a concept is its denotation and a set of meaning constitutive inference rules (analytic implications similar in outcome to meaning postulates) accessible via the concept's logical entry activated by the word serving as a pointer to the concept. In the case of ad hoc concepts in the RT lexical pragmatics, their denotation is a narrowed and/or broadened denotation of a concept encoded by the word providing the evidential input to the ad hoc concept's derivation. In Carston's pragmatics, ad hoc concepts' denotations cannot be established in this way because there are no lexicalized encoded concepts, related to ad hoc concepts, on whose denotations the latter would base. The denotations of such new ad hoc concepts, if determinable at all, would not be intersubjective, for lack of grounding in lexicalized concepts meaning. The denotational status of non-conceptual, invariant, schematic word meaning has not been clarified. Consequently, the denotation, that is, the meaning of such new ad hoc concepts is not easily (if at all) predictable and determinable. Similarly, truth-conditional meaning constitutive inference rules are most probably not accessible, either, for lack of logical entries to such concepts. Such occasion-specific ad hoc concepts lack enforced stability,<sup>19</sup> which results in no access to pragmatic inference rules correlated with word meaning. So, the question about those

18 The external criterion of explicature identification is the availability principle, according to which "in deciding whether the pragmatically determined aspect of utterance meaning is part of what is said, we should always try to preserve our pre-theoretic intuitions on the matter" (Carston and Hall, 2012, p. 14).

19 The predicted lack of stability of such ad hoc concepts in Carston's pragmatics would deprive them of their conceptual status in canonical RT interpretation of concepts.

new ad hoc concepts meaning and nature seems to be open. Until this is clarified, there are no grounds to claim their contribution to the truth-conditional content of explicature, the operational definition of which has collapsed anyway, since explicature cannot be the result of conceptual logical form development if there is no such entity. How explicatures could express determinate, conceptual, semantic, truth-conditional, and truth-evaluable propositions with no conceptual input to occasion-specific ad hoc concepts construction, which results in their denotational and inferential meaning being not determinate (and possibly not determinable) and consequently not truth-conditional is a problem that needs further explanation in Carston's pragmatics. Until then, it is difficult to postulate compatibility between RT and the new proposal, concerning the (a) subtask of the relevance-theoretic comprehension procedure.

An analysis of the following example illustrates the difference.<sup>20</sup>

Context: Two acquaintances (A and B) are talking about John's professional skills.

A: *Is John a good surgeon?*

B: *He is a butcher.*

[John is a bad surgeon]

In the example, the version of B's utterance in square brackets is an approximation to its explicature as possibly recovered by A. In RT terms, what makes A recover the explicit content of B's utterance is A's search for relevance as predicted by the two principles of relevance. The recovery of explicature follows the relevance-theoretic comprehension procedure. A constructs a hypothesis about explicit content, that is, the explicature of the utterance, via decoding, disambiguation, reference resolution, and other pragmatic enrichment processes such as ad hoc concept construction. The automatic decoding process results in logical form recovery, comprising semantically/linguistically encoded meaning (Carston, 2009, 2010). Logical forms are structured sets of atomic concepts, potentially undergoing individual-relative pragmatic adjustment (Carston, 2010). In the example, the structure of the decoded logical form of the string of words *He is a butcher* could be BUTCHER (John). Guided by his search for relevance, A accesses a mental atomic concept BUTCHER via simple mapping from the lexical form of the open-class item *butcher*. The accessed concept may undergo individual-relative pragmatic adjustment, depending on A's BUTCHER related assumptions and experience. Since the potentially recovered explicature of B's utterance with the literal interpretation of BUTCHER [John earns money working as a butcher] does not confirm the expected relevance of B's utterance, the word *butcher* apart from encoding the concept BUTCHER may serve as a clue to A to construct an ad hoc concept BUTCHER\*, which is arrived at through mutual pragmatic adjustment of potential explicature and contextual implications. This allows A to construct an explicature of B's utterance [John is a bad surgeon], which satisfies A's expectation of relevance, against what he assumes makes a good surgeon, and he stops processing. C's possible explicature of the same expression could be [John is a good surgeon], if C's view of surgeons is that they should be like butchers – tough, decisive, and insensitive.

20 Various examples of category extension/narrowing/change analysis, including the "butcher" case reappear in numerous RT papers (Carston, 2010; Sperber and Wilson, 1998 [2012]).

In Robyn Carston's pragmatics, this simulation of the comprehension process is inadmissible, for lack of conceptual logical form BUTCHER (John), for lack of lexicalized mental atomic concept BUTCHER (no word-concept mapping), for lack of the possibility of individual-relative pragmatic adjustment of the encoded concept BUTCHER, as there is no such concept. The ad hoc concept construction, which in RT hinges on the relatedness between the encoded concept and the newly constructed ad hoc concept, is inadmissible, either, as there is no encoded concept to which the ad hoc concept could relate. The analysis confirms the incompatibility of the two accounts. For lack of detailed interpretations of invariant, non-conceptual standing word meaning and of the meaning and status of postulated ad hoc concepts, an attempt at a similar simulation of utterance understanding process in terms of Carston's pragmatics would be unjustifiably speculative.

## 5. Conclusions

Over the nearly three decades of Relevance Theory development, the presented interpretations of standing word meaning have changed. However, until Robyn Carston's (2013, 2012) new proposal, they assumed a conceptual (at least partly) nature of open-class items content. The claim that stable, invariant word meaning is non-conceptual, non-semantic, non-truth-conditional, and schematic seems to be incompatible with the (a) subtask of the relevance-theoretic comprehension procedure, concerning constructing an appropriate hypothesis of an explicit content of an utterance. The incompatibility concerns the interpretation of logical form, logical form development, the nature of ad hoc concepts, and the meaning of explicature.

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**Streszczenie**

Interpretacje konwencjonalnego znaczenia słów (rzeczowników, czasowników i przymiotników) zmieniły się wraz ze zmianami samej Teorii Relewancji (część opisowa). Jednakże, do czasu najnowszej propozycji Robyn Carston (2013, 2012), interpretacje te zakładały pojęciowy charakter omawianego znaczenia. Propozycja Carston, że skonwencjonalizowane, pozakontekstowe znaczenie leksykalne jest apojęciowe, asemantyczne, nieprawdofunkcjonalne i schematyczne wydaje się stać w sprzeczności z tą częścią relewancyjnej procedury opisującej proces rozumienia wypowiedzi, która dotyczy konstrukcji jej eksplikatury (część dyskursywna: krytyka propozycji Carston z perspektywy Teorii Relewancji).

**Abstract**

The Relevance Theory interpretations of standing word meaning have changed during the evolution of the theory itself (the expository part of the paper). However, until Robyn Carston's (2013, 2012) new proposal, a conceptual (at least partly) nature of open-class items content was assumed. The claim that stable, invariant word meaning is non-conceptual, non-semantic, non-truth-conditional and schematic seems to be incompatible with the subtask of the relevance-theoretic comprehension procedure concerning constructing an appropriate hypothesis about explicit content of an utterance (the discursive, critical evaluation of Carston's proposal).