المجلة العربية لعلم الترجمة
Arabic Journal for Translation Studies
Early View
ISSN: 2750-6142
OPEN ACCESS

# Optimal Relevance in Interpreting and Translating Processes

**Aalaa Yaseen Hassan[1] & Mahasin Abdulqadir Hasan[2]**

[1]University of Baghdad, Baghdad, Iraq
[2]Al-Nisour University College, Baghdad, Iraq
*Corresponding author 1: alaa.y@coeduw.uobaghdad.edu.iq*
*Corresponding author 2: mahasen.a.english@nuc.edu.iq*
*ORCID iD 1: 0000-0002-9970-0458*
*ORCID iD 2: 0009-0006-9571-0719*

| Received | Accepted | Published online |
|---|---|---|
| 13/03/2025 | 03/07/2025 | 29/08/2025 |

doi: 10.63939/ajts.c5bkwq77

**Cite this article as:** Hassan, A. Y., & Hasan, M. A. (2025). Optimal Relevance in Interpreting and Translating Processes. *Arabic Journal for Translation Studies, 4*(13). https://doi.org/10.63939/ajts.c5bkwq77.

## Abstract

This study investigates the types of difficulties faced by translators in achieving optimal interpretation. The relevance degree is adapted to achieve an optimal meaning when conveying the translated text. The text should be fully comprehensible without unneeded effort. To achieve this goal, the translator should understand the source text. Then, she or he recreates a translated text that is close to the original one, taking into consideration the intended audience and cultural norms. To apply it in the realm of optimality, the concepts of decision theory and utility theory are utilized. The study clarifies that the translator's selection of an utterance is based on relevance, as they aim to convey their intention and be understood. This in turn suggests that literal utterances take more effort to process than implied ones. For optimal relevance, the utterance should be the most relevant one, according to the readers' preferences and abilities. Finally, it is notable to mention that the study suggests developing and implementing this process of translation. As a result, it could significantly improve the translator's achievements in decoding any text appropriately.

**Keywords:** Relevance Theory, Optimality Theory, Pragmatics, Decision Theory, Translation Evaluation

ISSN: 2750-6142
OPEN ACCESS

## 1. Introduction

Optimality Theory (henceforth OT) was founded by Prince and Smolensky, who introduced a new approach to phonology in human language in the early 1990s. This approach gained recognition in 1993. It is concerned with the relationship between the proposed underlying (input) and output representations (Zeevat, 2010; Benz, 2011). This theory has a great influence not only on phonology but also on other important areas such as syntax, semantics, sociolinguistics, historical linguistics, pragmatics, and others. The central point in Semantics and Pragmatics is the interpretation of the utterance, in other words, how you get the optimal interpretation from a hierarchy of constraints. The interpretation of the utterance is determined by the hearers and the linguistic meaning. The hearers can efficiently and quickly recognize the implied interpretation of the speaker's utterance. This claim suggests that there are fixed restrictions that help them to infer the right interpretation of a given context. For a theory of interpretation, an input is a syntactic representation that creates an infinite set of candidate interpretations. The system selects the optimal interpretation that satisfies the ordered set of constraints (Vidal and Jungl, 2006).

The notion of optimality in the semantic field was introduced by de Hoop and de Swart (2000) and Hendriks and de Hoop (2001), who stated that OT can be used to determine the optimal interpretation for a specific syntactic structure. According to them, a certain group of constraints and rankings is established by public principles of rational communication (Blutner, 2004). OT is applied in the pragmatic field by Blutner (1998), who first attempted to elucidate a particular phenomenon of lexical pragmatics. However, it was significantly developed by Hendriks and de Hoop (2001), who presented the optimal interpretation approach (Blutner, 2013).

To employ OT in translation, Pym (1992) mentioned that the translator must use translation competence to generate and select between different texts. This is a straightforward hypothesis with many benefits. It's not inherently reductive, but it is limited; its comparative advantages include its fitness for intra-lingual translation. There are multiple translation approaches, and rejection of the idea of exclusive correctness. This is because the definition above, which includes speed and confidence, does not preclude controversy between translators or future progress by the same interpreter (Pym 1992). Still, Pym does not show how the interpreter chooses between different candidate of translated texts, saying that he has “absolutely nothing of importance to say about the matter” Despite claiming to have "absolutely nothing of importance to say about the matter," Pym does not provide a clarification of how the interpreter choose between the different possible interpretations (Pym 1992). The study has been tackled by other researchers. Chesterman (1997) explained Karl Popper’s theory of knowledge acquisition, while Pym’s idea was discussed in Mason’s (1994) thesis. In this study, decision theory and utility theory were utilized to select the most optimal translation, which focuses on the meaning of the utterance and the effectiveness of conveying the speech.

## 2. Pragmatic Principles in Optimality Theory

OT is applied to the realm of Gricean pragmatics by Blutner (1998), who deals with pragmatic inference as a common effort between the speaker and the addressee. In this respect, the interlocutor attempts to use the least marked expressions to minimize the hearer's effort to understand his speech, and the addressee tries to get the most relevant or informative interpretation. From this theory, we can reach the optimization system by comparing the two sides (the interlocutor’s and addressee's sides) (Potts, 2008).

Blutner (1998) redirects the OT in the field of Pragmatics to integrate the opinion of speaker and hearer into an immediate optimization procedure. In this view, Grice's theory is reduced by Levinson (2000) into three principles that are less reductionist than Horn's divisions. The three divisions are as follows: Q-principle (optimization of information content), I-principle (optimization of content), and M-principle (minimization of form) (Jaszczolt, 2010). In addition, these principles are not only concerned with the speaker-oriented maxim as Grice's theory does, but also with the hearer-oriented maxim (Mattausch, 2004).

For optimal relevance, the addressee has to understand the speaker's meaning with little effort of processing and with a great deal of contextual effects (i.e. the utterance is worth processing and clear enough to the hearer), which means that the speaker makes his/her intention manifest to the addressee because taking time in processing the message is seen as a negative factor. As a result, the speech that takes more processing effort will be less relevant to the addressee. This principle of relevance initiates the procedure of relevance theoretic comprehension (interpreting the utterance by the addressee). Furthermore, the listener concentrates on the speech that costs the least processing effort and the interpretation that meets both conditions of the presumption of optimal relevance (Loukusa, 2007; Bataller, 2004). The two conditions are as follows:

1. the utterance has at least relevance enough that it is worth the effort exercised by the speaker to get it, and
2. the most relevant one that is in agreement with the interlocutor’s abilities and preferences (Wilson & Sperber, 1994).

According to the first condition, the utterance should achieve adequate cognitive effects (Bardzokas, 2012). The communicator conveys a message in which the interpretation calls for less processing effort, as well as the addressee expects that the communicator attempts to communicate something worth his processing effort (Casacuberta, Figueras, and Martìnez, 1999). So, the communicator aims to make the utterance as easily understood as possible, i.e., the communicator has aimed at optimal relevance (Moreno, 2003). In (2), the sender wants to be understood; therefore, he/she has to make his/her utterance as easy as possible to be understood by the receivers to a certain extent of his/her capabilities and preferences. In this situation, Sperber and Wilson argue that communication can be fulfilled when the speaker gives evidence of their purpose of communication (Wilson & Sperber, 2004). For optimal relevance, the first relevant interpretation that the hearer gets is the right one, i.e., the one that the communicator wants to say (Borg, 2008).

The communicative principle of relevance initiates the fact that clear communication conveys a presumption of optimal relevance within each single act. This does not mean that every act of communication is optimally relevant, because sometimes the speaker cannot convey their intended meaning as informatively as required; rather, they give evidence of their beliefs/thoughts that the information is indeed relevant in the communication process (Bardzokas, 2012). The term of relevance has been classified by Zhou (2004) into four divisions: optimal relevance, strong relevance, weak relevance, and irrelevance, as in Table (1):

Table (1): Relevance Degree (Zhou, 2004) translated by Zhonggang (2006)

| Relevance | Contextual implication | Processing effort |
|---|---|---|
| **Optimal relevance** | Fully comprehensible | Without unnecessary effort |
| **Strong relevance** | Relatively clear | With some necessary effort |
| **Weak relevance** | Implied | Considerable effort taken |
| **Irrelevance** | Vague and unclear | All the effort is in vain |

Some linguists have an interest in connecting the concept of optimal relevance and OT, as R. Van Rooy (2004) showed in his article, *Relevance and Bidirectional Optimality*. The Optimality-Theoretic Pragmatics is somehow related to RT by Sperber and Wilson (1986); both approaches share their agreement on the concepts rather than the idea of literal meaning. The concepts include i) Semantic Underdetermination, and ii) Contextualism (it proposes that pragmatic interpretation determines the speaker’s talk with its meaning) (Sperber, Cara & Girotto, 1995).

OT can reconstruct both Grice's theory and RT, where Grice's theory concentrates on a speaker-oriented normative pragmatics, whilst RT is focused on a hearer-oriented naturalistic pragmatics (8). In RT, the optimal relevance is a pragmatic principle in opposition to the neo-Gricean theory, which has two opposing optimization principles: The I/R-principle and the Q-principle, reduced by Atlas & Levinson (1981), Horn (who used R as an alternative to I), and Levinson (2000) (Sperber, Cara & Girotto, 1995).

## 3. The Relevance Theoretic Approach

The communicative principle of relevance yields two important points along with the definition of the optimal relevance. The points highlight the minimalism in the efforts of processing cognitive effects by following interpretive hypotheses, which include (disambiguation, reference, resolution, implicatures, etc.), and cease once the listener is contented with his/her expectations of relevance (Wilson & Sperber, 2004). In more detail, the relevance theoretic comprehension procedure is explained as follows:

1. The interpretation of an utterance has to follow the least effort path. In general, the interpretation of the utterance includes explicature and both the implicated premises and conclusions.
2. Make sure that the interpretation meets the two conditions of the presumption of optimal relevance or not. That means (1) is of enough relevance (i.e., in processing the utterance, it should supply the hearer with enough cognitive effects for the effort expended), and (2) is the most accurate relevant interpretation that suits the communicator's abilities and preferences (the addressee's abilities and preferences are estimated by the addressee).
3. If the communicator is not fully competent and the utterance is not relevant enough as it should be, then the overall cognitive economy will cancel the search because we cannot get the optimal interpretation in a reasonable time/effort (Allott, 2013).

Therefore, Wilson and Sperber (2002) suggest three aspects in the comprehension process: a. The explicit content is constructed through (i) decoding, (ii) disambiguation, (iii) reference resolution, (iv) enrichment, and (v) deriving implicatures. b. Through decoding, the explicit content establishes a suitable hypothesis about the explicit meaning (explicature). c. The intended contextual assumption is a suitable hypothesis about the implicated content (implicated premises). From the input and the context together, the implicated conclusion is created, but not from the input or the context alone (Sanz, 2013; Jodłowiec, 2010).

## 4. Implicature

Grice defined implicature as something that is not part of 'what is said', which is unlike implication employed in semantics and logic. Wilson and Sperber (1994) attempted to shift pragmatics into the scope of cognitive. Sperber and Wilson reduced the different types of meanings found in the Gricean and Neo-Gricean theories into two groups.: explicature and implicature. The concentration lies on the first aspect rather than the second one, which receives less comment and attention. For Sperber and Wilson, explicature is regarded as complementary to implicature, in which the pragmatic inferences contribute not only to the implied meaning but also to "what is said", i.e., what is explicitly communicated. In the RT framework, implicature can be defined as any communicated assumption that is not an explicature (Haugh, 2002). Sperber and Wilson distinguished between explicit and implicit meaning. Levinson (2000) has argued that implicatures cannot be seen as opposite to explicatures, as the difference between indirectness and hinting; therefore, they are not considered synonymous.

Haugh (2002) presents four properties of implied meaning:

1. The speaker does not say what is meant. The concept of literal meaning can be defined in a variety of contradictory ways; however, suggested meaning refers to a coded meaning that is only slightly impacted by context, according to Ariel (2002), it is known as "linguistic minimal meaning." For instance, Lucy calls her friend's house on the phone and asks, "Is John there?" Here, the speaker implies that she wants to talk with John, and this is regarded as a kind of request. For this utterance, the implied meaning is something like: "Can I speak to John?".
2. The hearer infers what is suggested based on the speaker's words and how they were expressed in a specific context. In this case, what is said is inferred by the addressee, and it is not encoded from the literal meaning of the word. Here, the inference is generated from different situational factors. For example, if Nancy asks her friend, "Do you like Star Wars?" and he replies, "Well, I like the music," Nancy may understand that he does not particularly like 'Star Wars'. Therefore, he does not particularly like Star Wars is not encoded linguistically from his response, but inferred by the addressee.
3. What is implied is negotiable; it can be refuted at a later point in the discussion. For instance, Suzan asks her friend if he wants to go with her to a party tomorrow night, then her friend answers 'Oh, I am busy with something else,' his utterance will imply that he will not go to the party, later on he says 'I am still going, but I will be arriving late.' His response will cancel the first implicature associated with the first utterance. Here, the conversationalist misleads her (Haugh, 2002)
4. The speaker intends additional things beyond what they have expressly stated. Being meant "in addition to what is said" has two important components. Two things must happen for something to be considered an implicature: first, it must work independently of what is said explicitly, and second, the hearer must consider both what is stated explicitly and what is implied (Haugh, 2002).

Sperber & Wilson present two kinds of r-implicatures: implicated premises and implicated conclusions. According to Huang (2007), implicated premises are contextual assumptions intended by the communicator and supplied by the hearer, whereas implicated conclusions are contextual implications communicated by the communicator. Sperber and Wilson (1986) state that:

> "We assume that a crucial step in the processing of new information, and particularly of verbally communicated information, is to combine it with an adequately selected set of background assumptions—which then constitutes the context …"

### 4.1 Explicature and Implicature Distinction

Sperber & Wilson have developed Grice's idea of “what is said” and implicature to become a central idea of utterance understanding. The first concept is called by Sperber and Wilson as explicature, which is distinguished between two types of meaning: linguistic decoded meaning and pragmatic inferred one, i.e., it is a semantic/pragmatic distinction (Carston, 2004). Wilson and Sperber (1994) argue that Grice has failed to realize the contribution of pragmatics to 'what is said', and they improve on that in their notion of explicature (Huang, 2007). The idea of "What is said" is related to the conventional linguistic meaning; however, it is extended by Sperber and Wilson to determine the truth condition of the utterance. It can be achieved by including the contextual meanings that contribute to the utterance’s sentence minimal meaning (Murtisari, 2013). Generally, the information that can be understood by encoding linguistic forms is known as explicature. Huang (2007) mentions that explicature is defined as "an inferential development of one of the incomplete conceptual representations or logical forms (9). Sperber & Wilson (1986) define explicature as: "An assumption communicated by an utterance is an explicature if and only if it is a development of a logical form encoded by that utterance." (p. 182).

As in the relevance-theoretic account, the listener identifies a form of an utterance which is logical (the interpretation of an utterance), where the contextual information to produce an explicature is enriched by the logical form. Therefore, an explicitly communicated assumption is indicated as explicature (Sperber & Wilson, 1986). In other words, the phase of decoding produces explicature (the output) in relevance theory. Also, it is known as the utterance’s 'logical form’. To enrich this form to the level of a fully developed proposition, we have some aspects mentioned by Sperber and Wilson and expanded by Carston. Therefore, explicature is coupled with Grice's concept of 'what is said', but it differs in two ways:

For Grice's concept, reference assignment and disambiguation are the main aspects of deriving 'what is said'. Whilst explicature derivation involves more pragmatic processes. The second difference shows deriving explicature and implicature, which are seen as the output of the same pragmatic processes. Grice (1975), Levinson (2000), and Recanati (1989, 1993) argue that deriving an explicitly communicated proposition is recognized from deriving implicatures (Matsui, 2001). Blakemore (1992) stated that there are different ways to specify the communicative interactions of explicature, such as enrichment, gap filling, disambiguation, and bridging. To complete and enrich conceptual representations and logic forms, we have five important areas, and they are as follows:

1. Disambiguation and reference resolution, for Carston (2002), the semantic representation of an utterance is a logical form which needs pragmatic processes to enrich the incomplete utterances and to fill the gap, as in the case of disambiguation and reference assignment.

2. According to the concept of saturation, the linguistically decoded logical form is saturated by the process of contextually filling some positions or given slots.
3. Free Enrichment is not like a saturation process because it is optional. For Carston (2004), free enrichment can be defined as a process in which conceptual insights are added to the decoded logical form. In psychology, it is better to narrow down the concept when the speaker employs it in her utterance.
4. Ad hoc Concept is proposed by Barsalou (1983). It is defined as the adjusting lexical concept pragmatically through narrowing, or in other words, strengthening the concept; broadening in terms of weakening the concept; or both of them (Huang, 2007).

## 5. Context, Inference, and Intention

Context is a pretty significant concept in this theory. It is a psychological construct, a subset of the addressee, background knowledge, or assumptions about the world (Wilson & Rose, 1997). In other words, context is a set of beliefs or assumptions that the hearer employs to decode a message and to determine the meaning that the speaker wants to convey. Sperber and Wilson argue that we cannot identify all speakers' meanings through using our cognitive environment because this would be too difficult. So, the hearer chooses the context that he feels is most relevant to process the message, i.e., he will not use everything he knows to process every message. Now, let us shed light on the sender. For Sperber and Wilson's perspective of communication, the message that is decoded by the receiver has to be known by the sender as a possible context to communicate it effectively with the receiver (Gordon, 2009).

According to Sperber and Wilson, the context is chosen rather than being given, because the process of comprehension constructs the context. The communication fails when the wrong context is chosen. Therefore, it is very important to choose the right context. By the existing logic, knowledge, and encyclopedic information, the audience will choose, adjust, and extend the cognitive context in the process of communication. As well as, If the context is not relevant to the utterance, then it will not be chosen (Yi-bo, 2015).

According to intention, the sender can achieve successful communication when the receiver becomes aware of the speaker's communicative intention. It is not enough to convey her message, but the hearer has to realize that she is conveying a message. The sender must also establish that the receiver has recognized what she wants to send. The attempt to communicate is conscious by the sender but not the receiver; Sperber and Wilson refer to it as "informing rather than communicating" (Gordon, 2009). For instance, the communicator gives direct evidence to the addressee by sending the stimulus (the utterance); this stimulus makes the addressee arrive at certain conclusions that come from a set of assumptions that are mutually manifest to all participants. This set of assumptions is either communicated explicitly or implicitly, as well as strongly or weakly. According to

Sperber and Wilson, the communicator is attributed two intentions: the informative intention (informing the hearer of something), and the communicative intention (informing the hearer of this informative intention) (Sytnyk, 2014).

In inference, to understand each other's true intentions, the conversation participants rarely take the time to carefully select their words. As a result, the hearer's job is to understand what is said and extrapolate the speaker's meaning. The hearer must make what is commonly referred to as pragmatic inference to deduce the speaker's communicative intention during utterance communication (Bai & Chen, 2010). There are two methods for providing the addressee with information. The first is to directly demonstrate the information the speaker needs to get over, and the second is to directly demonstrate the information one intends to provide. The former should not be considered as a form of communication, whilst the second method is a form of communication (Franken, 1998: 62-63).

## 6. Methodology

It is a theoretical study showing how to use optimal relevance theory in the realm of translation. To apply it in the realm of optimality, the concepts of decision theory and utility theory are utilized. The study clarifies that the translator's selection of an utterance is based on relevance, as they aim to convey their intention and be understood. This in turn suggests that literal utterances take more effort to process than implied ones. For optimal relevance, the utterance should be the most relevant one, according to the readers' preferences and abilities. The relevance degree is adapted to achieve an optimal meaning when conveying the translated text. The text should be fully comprehensible without unnecessary effort, and to achieve this goal, the translator should understand the source text and recreate a translated text, which is close to the original one with taking into consideration the intended audience and cultural norms.

## 7. Employing Optimal Relevance in the Translation Process

In this section, there are different ways to translate any text. They depend on the translator’s background and their ability to infer the source language and convey it into the target language correctly. Table (2) is adapted from Zhou (2004).

**Table (2): Kinds of Translation in the light of Relevance Theory**

| Kinds of Translation | Translator’s Background Knowledge | Receiver’s Comprehension |
|---|---|---|
| **Optimal relevant** | Excellent | Fully comprehensible without unnecessary effort |
| **Strong relevant** | Good | Relatively clear with some necessary effort |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Weak relevant** | Average | Implied that considerable effort is needed |
| **Irrelevant** | Weak | Vague and unclear, the effort is in vain |

According to this table, the translator should fully understand the two languages, the source and the target languages, when getting into the process of translation to achieve optimal relevance. The optimality here works on both sides: the translator and the text. The translator should have excellent knowledge when encoding and decoding the messages, and the text should be fully understandable and close to the original text without unnecessary effort to the receivers. The text is sometimes strongly relevant and relatively clear with some necessary effort, and this is due to the acceptable or good knowledge that the translator has. However, when the text is implied and needs considerable effort, here the knowledge is average, and the translator needs to work on the two languages considerably. Whilst the translator's knowledge is considered weak when the source text is vague, unclear, and all effort is in vain.

To use it in the optimality realm, the notions of Decision Theory and Utility Theory are employed here. For Condorcet (1847), the decision-making process involves discussing principles of optimal relevance, reducing it to a manageable set of alternatives, and ultimately making the actual choice between these alternatives. This model minimizes processing effort and increases contextual effects. The speaker chooses between alternatives based on specific standards, such as price or taste. For example, in a restaurant, the speaker might choose soup A over soup B or soup C. The relation "better than" is used to compare alternatives, and the mathematical relation "A>B" is used. Utility in decision-making is used to choose the alternative with the highest utility (Hansson, 2015).

Grice (1957) suggested that communicators use specific standards to evaluate alternative hypotheses about the speaker's intended meaning. Sperber & Wilson (1986) suggest that the interpretation of a proposition depends on the number of contextual implications and processing effort required. Relevance is defined by two extent conditions: large contextual effects and small processing effort. These conditions help explain the relevance of assumptions in specific contexts. Interpretations of assumptions can have more contextual implications, such as being more informative or easier to understand. If the interpretation is better than the other, it eliminates equally many choices. Wilson and Sperber (1994) and Van Rooy (2004) use contextual effects to strengthen or weaken assumptions, i.e., the speaker aims to maximize utility value.

The speaker's selection of an utterance is based on relevance, as they aim to convey their intention and be understood. The "literal meaning hypothesis" suggests that literal utterances take less effort to process than non-literal ones. For optimal relevance, the utterance should be the most relevant one possible, according to the speaker's abilities and preferences. The interpretation of the utterance should follow a path of least processing effort, as the speaker aims to make the utterance as relevant as possible. Thus, Wilson and Sperber (1994) highlight two crucial conditions for effective communication: the utterance's relevance and compatibility with the speaker's abilities and preferences, and the speaker's meaning often being implied rather than directly stated (Jucker and Taavitsainen, 2000; Pattemore, 2004; Simms, 2009; Carston, 2013).

Translating an Arabic sentence into English: غير العالم بأن تكون انت

a) Change the world by being yourself.
b) Be yourself to make a difference.
c) The world is changing with you.
d) You change yourself and the world.

The translation (1a) is the most optimal one, according to the Arabic order of the sentence: verb + object + complement, which is the same in English. The translation also correctly conveys the optimal meaning, which is fully comprehensible without unnecessary effort. For (1b), the order is not the same as in English, and the meaning of the words is somehow different, such as "غير العالم" being translated as "make a difference." The expression "make a difference" is "احدث تغيرا او فرقا" in Arabic, where the word "العالم" is omitted in this sentence, and the meaning of "احدث تغيرا او فرقا" is indirectly correct. Thus, it has strong relevance and is relatively clear, with some necessary effort. In (1c), the sequence of the sentence is not the same as in Arabic: subject + verb + object, and the meaning is not the same because it refers to the fact that the world is changing, whereas the world has not been changing in the source text. The sentence is declarative here, while the Arabic sentence implies encouraging the listener to make a positive impact on people and the world. This sentence has weak relevance and needs considerable effort. The last sentence (1d) has different semantic and syntactic differences. The target sentence expresses a statement, and the source sentence is imperative. Additionally, the meaning is not the same; thus, it is irrelevant with a vague and unclear translation, in which the effort is in vain.

A is better than B (A>B)

A is better than C (A>C)

A is better than D (A> D). A is the best translation to use by the translator.

(1a) is better than (1b), in which case (1b) gives less information, which is relatively clear, with some necessary effort. (1c) It is less relevant because it needs considerable effort. Then (1c) is irrelevant due to the vague and unclear translation, in which the effort is in vain. Therefore, (1a) is the optimal one.

F(1) = maxi UV (A).

## Conclusion

In the pursuit of achieving optimal interpretation in translation, this study has delved into the intricate web of challenges faced by translators and the strategies employed to overcome them. Through an exploration of relevance theory, decision theory, and utility theory, this research has shed light on the multifaceted nature of translation as a communicative act, where the translator's ultimate goal is to convey meaning with clarity and relevance to the intended audience. The findings of this study underscore the pivotal role of relevance in the translation process. Translators navigate a delicate balance between fidelity to the source text and adaptability to the target audience's linguistic and cultural norms. They strive to create translations that are not only faithful representations of the original text but also resonate with the readers, ensuring that comprehension is achieved without undue effort. Central to the concept of optimal interpretation is the notion that translators must make informed decisions about which utterances to select based on their perceived relevance to the communicative goal. This involves a nuanced understanding of both the source and target languages, as well as the ability to discern the most effective means of conveying meaning in a given context. This study suggests that literal translations may not always be the most optimal choice, as they can impose cognitive burdens on the reader and detract from overall comprehension. By embracing the principles of relevance theory, translators can strive towards achieving optimal relevance in their translations. This entails selecting utterances that are not only contextually appropriate but also maximally informative and engaging for the intended audience. Through careful consideration of the readers' abilities and preferences, translators can tailor their translations to ensure that the message is conveyed with maximum clarity and impact. Furthermore, this study advocates for the development and implementation of processes that facilitate optimal translation practices. By integrating insights from decision theory and utility theory into translation methodologies, translators can enhance their ability to decode and reconstruct texts with greater accuracy and efficiency. This holistic approach to translation holds the promise of yielding significant improvements in the quality and effectiveness of translated materials across diverse linguistic and cultural contexts. In conclusion, this research contributes to our understanding of the challenges and complexities inherent in the translation process. By elucidating the role of relevance and decision-making in achieving optimal interpretation, it provides valuable insights that can inform and enrich translation practices. Moving forward, continued exploration and refinement of these concepts are essential for advancing the field of translation studies and ensuring that translations continue to serve as bridges between languages and cultures in an increasingly interconnected world.

## Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

## References

Allott, N. (2013). Relevance theory. In *Perspectives on linguistic pragmatics* (pp. 57-98). Cham: Springer International Publishing.

Ariel, M. (2002). The demise of a unique concept of literal meaning. *Journal of Pragmatics*, *34*(4), 361-402.

Atlas, J. D., & Levinson, S. C. (1981). It-clefts, informativeness and logical form: Radical pragmatics (revised standard version). In *Radical pragmatics* (pp. 1-62). Academic Press.

Bai, L., & Chen, J. (2010). On Pragmatic Inference and Metaphor from the Perspective of Relevance Theory. *Journal of Cambridge Studies*

Bardzokas, V. (2012). *Causality and connectives: From Grice to relevance*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Bataller, S. M. (2004). Lexical Pragmatics: Relevance Theory and Generalized Conversational Implicatures. *Universitat de València*.

Benz, A. (2011). On bidirectional Optimality Theory for dynamic contexts. *Bidirectional Optimality Theory*, *180*, 249.

Blakemore, D. (1992). *Understanding Utterances: An Introduction to Pragmatics*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Barsalou, L. W. (1983). Ad hoc categories. *Memory & cognition*, *11*, 211-227.

Blutner, R. (1998). Lexical pragmatics. *Journal of semantics*, *15*(2), 115-162.

Blutner, R. (2004). Formal Pragmatics. In *Optimality theory and pragmatics*, ed. Y. Huang, R. Blutner, and H. Zeevat. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Blutner, R., & Zeevat, H. (2013). Pragmatics in Optimality Theory. *Beyond words. Content, context, and inference*, 33-58.

Borg, E. (2008). Intention-based semantics. In *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Language*, ed. E. Lepore and B. C. Smith. New York: Oxford University Press.

Carston, R. (2004). Relevance theory and the saying/implicating distinction. *The handbook of pragmatics*, 633-656.

Carston, R. (2013). Legal texts and canons of construction: A view from current pragmatic theory. *Law and language: Current legal issues*, *15*, 8-33.

Casacuberta, D., Figueras, C. and Martìnez, R. (1999). The R files: Applying relevance model to conspiracy theory fallacies. *Journal of English Studies 1*, p.45-55.

Chesterman, A. (1997). *Memes of Translation*. Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins.

Condorcet, J. A. N. D. C. (1874). Plan de constitution présenté a la Convention nationale, les 15 et 16 février. *Oeuvres*, vol. 12, pp. 333-415.

De Hoop, H., & De Swart, H. (2000). Temporal adjunct clauses in Optimality Theory: 2621. *Italian journal of linguistics*, *12*(1), 107-128.

Franken, N. (1998). Communication in relevance theory. *Revista alicantina de estudios ingleses,* 11*, pp. 59-74*.

Gordon, A. D. (2009). *Communicating the gospel effectively using relevance theory and the corpus Christi festival: A case study in El-Tingo, Ecuador*. PhD diss. Faculty of the School of Intercultural Studies.

Grice, H. P. (1957). Meaning. *The philosophical review*, *66*(3), 377-388.

Grice, H. P. (1975). Logic and conversation. In *Syntax and Semantics, 3: Speech Acts,* ed. P. Cole and J. L. Morgan, 41-58. New York: Academic Press

Hansson, Sven Ove (2015). Decision theory: A brief introduction. *Royal Institute of Technology (KTH)*

Haugh, M. (2002). The intuitive basis of implicature: relevance theoretic implicitness versus Gricean implying. *Pragmatics. Quarterly Publication of the International Pragmatics Association (IPrA)*, *12*(2), 117-134.

Hendriks, P., & De Hoop, H. (2001). Optimality theoretic semantics. *Linguistics and philosophy*, *24*, 1-32.

Huang, Y. (2007). *Pragmatics*. London: Oxford University Press.

Huang, Y. (2012). Neo-Gricean Pragmatic theory of conversational implicature. In *The Oxford Handbook of linguistic analysis*, ed. B. Heine and H. Narrog. Oxford: New York.

Jaszczolt, K. M. (2010). Post-Gricean pragmatics. *The Routledge Pragmatics Encyclopedia*, 362-364.

Jodłowiec, M. (2010). The role of relevance theory in SLA studies. *Cognitive processing in second language acquisition*, 49-66.

Jucker, A. H., & Taavitsainen, I. (2000). Diachronic speech act analysis: Insults from flyting to flaming. *Journal of Historical Pragmatics*, *1*(1), 67-95.

Levinson, S. C. (2000). *Presumptive meanings: The theory of generalized conversational implicature*. MIT Press.

Loukusa, S. (2007). The use of context in pragmatic language comprehension in normally developing children and children with Asperger syndrome/high-functioning autism: An application of relevance theory. *Faculty of Humanities of the University of Oulu* 106, (October).

Mason, I. (1994). Techniques of translation revisited: a text-linguistic review of ‘borrowing’and ‘modulation’. *Estudis sobre la traducció. Castelló: Publicacions de la Universitat Jaume I*, 61-72.

Matsui, T. (2001). Experimental pragmatics: Towards testing relevance-based predictions about anaphoric bridging inferences. In *International and Interdisciplinary Conference on Modeling and Using Context* (pp. 248-260). Berlin, Heidelberg: Springer Berlin Heidelberg.

Mattausch, J. (2004). Optimality Theoretic pragmatics and binding phenomena. In *Optimality theory and pragmatics* (pp. 63-90). London: Palgrave Macmillan UK.

Moreno, A. L. (2003). The role of cohesive devices as textual constraints on relevance: A discourse-as-process view. *International Journal of English Studies*, *3*(1), 111-166.

Murtisari, E. T.(2013). Relevance-Based Framework for Explicitation/Implicitation: A New Alternative. *Trans-Kom*, 6 (2), 315-344.

Potts, C. (2008). Formal pragmatics. *The Routledge Encyclopedia of Pragmatics*, 167-170.

Prince, A., & Smolensky, P. (1993). Optimality Theory: Constraint interaction in generative grammar (Rutgers University Center for Cognitive Science Technical Report 2). *Rutgers Optmality Archive Version*, *8*, 2002.

Pattemore, S. (2004). *The people of God in the Apocalypse: Discourse, structure and exegesis* (Vol. 128). New York: Cambridge University Press.

Pym, A. (1992). *Translation and text transfer*. Frankfurt: Peter Lang.

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

Recanati, F. (1993). *Direct Reference: From Language to Thought*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Sanz, M. J. P. (2013). Relevance Theory and political advertising. *The European Journal of Humour Research*, *1*(2), 10-23.

Simms, K. (2009). Relevance theory. In *key ideas in linguistics and the philosophy of language*, ed. S. Chapman and C. Routledge, 193-199. Scotland: Edinburgh University Press.

Sperber, D., Cara, F., & Girotto, V. (1995). Relevance theory explains the selection task. *Cognition*, *57*(1), 31-95.

Sperber, D., & Wilson, D. (1986). *Relevance: Communication and cognition* (Vol. 142). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Sytnyk, A. (2014). *Argumentative euphemisms, political correctness and relevance*. 2014. PhD Thesis. éditeur non identifié.

Wilson, D., & Sperber, D. (1994). Outline of relevance theory. *Links & Letters*, (1), 085-106.

Wilson, D., & Sperber, D. (2004). Relevance Theory. In L. R. Horn & G. Ward (eds.), *The Handbook of Pragmatics*. (Blackwell), 607-632.

Wilson, J., & Rose, J. (1997). The Language of peace and conflict: Relevance theory and the Anglo-Irish agreement1. *Journal of Conflict Studies*, *17*(2), 51-72.

Van Rooy, R. (2004). Relevance and bidirectional optimality theory. In *Optimality theory and pragmatics* (pp. 173-210). London: Palgrave Macmillan UK.

Vidal, M. V. E., & Jungl, M. L. (2006). Remarks on optimality-theoretic pragmatics. In *A pleasure of life in words: a festschrisft for Angela Downing* (pp. 489-514). Facultad de Filología.

Yi-bo, Y. A. N. (2015). Analysis of puns in English advertising language from the relevance theory. *Sino-US English Teaching*, *12*(8), 602-607.

Zeevat, H. (2010). Optimal interpretation for rhetorical relations. *Benz et al.(2010)*, 35-59.

Zhonggang, S. (2006). A relevance theory perspective on translating the implicit information in literary texts. *Journal of Translation*, *2*(2), 43-60.

Zhou, F. Z. (2004). *On plurality of translation*. Beijing: China Translation and Publishing Corporation.