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“ A Relevance Theoretic account of ‘pero’ ”

Susana Olmos

This paper presents an account of the pragmatic function of the adversative discourse marker *pero* (*but*) according to Relevance Theory (RT). I will start with a brief explanation of this theoretical framework, which was presented in Sperber and Wilson (1986). RT adopts an interactional model to describe the reliance on inferential behaviour in language comprehension. Its analysis of connectives such as *but* (*pero*) has been very influential and I think it provides a good explanation of some of the uses of this connective. However, when accounting for the examples of *pero*, I found that the RT approach does not accurately portray the relationship between the functions of contrast and denial of expectation, on the one hand, and the information structure role of focus, on the other. I have then provided an alternative account including these notions. I have also attempted to overcome one of the main weaknesses of previous accounts by using authentic language data from the Spanish newspaper *El País* 2002. Finally, I will also point out how this new account presented here may have implications for the framework of RT in general.