

## Chapter 12

**Phrasal Pragmatics in Robyn Carston's Programme<sup>1</sup>***Esther Romero and Belén Soria***1 Introduction**

In this chapter, we argue that phrasal pragmatics is needed in Robyn Carston's programme on explicit communication. The accurate understanding of this proposal requires drawing attention to the linguistic unit phrase and its contribution to conceptual material, a conceptual material that may have a complex nature, as Carston explicitly says:

There are atomic concepts and there are complex concepts; atomic concepts are simple unstructured entities and complex concepts are structured strings of atomic concepts. [...] If a complex concept (i.e. a structured conceptual string) is linguistically encoded, the linguistic form involved is standardly a phrase and the concept is determined (at least in part) compositionally.

(Carston 2002: 321)

The general aim of this paper is to explore a field of pragmatics that we will call 'phrasal pragmatics' in order to study the behaviour of phrases and their meanings and how these meanings must often be pragmatically adjusted to determine the truth-conditions with which they contribute to what is said by means of the utterances of the sentences that include them.

This task, we will argue, cannot be made by means of Carston's lexical pragmatics in which only the pragmatics of atomic concepts is taken into account.<sup>2</sup> When we consider relevance-theoretic lexical pragmatics, we detect several problems related to metaphor and metonymy. These problems could be solved in relevance-theoretic terms but not without considering transfer by mapping as the result of an adjustment process required in the pragmatics of atomic concepts and, thus, risking the objective of a unitary account on *ad hoc* concepts,<sup>3</sup> and not without considering phrase meanings (and not only word meanings) as inputs of the conceptual processes of adjustment. Both a pragmatic process of transfer and phrase meanings as inputs of inferential processes are needed if we want to determine the truth-conditions of some utterances. There is another aspect of the truth-conditions of some utterances that lexical pragmatics cannot specify: the missing constituents. Although in order to explain examples of the latter, the pragmatic process required involves the adding of conceptual material, we want to argue that sometimes the addition of conceptual material takes place at the level of phrase and not at the level of sentence. Problems and limits of relevance-theoretic lexical pragmatics show that an area such as phrasal pragmatics has its own scope of study. Phrasal pragmatics, unlike lexical pragmatics, studies pragmatically derived complex concepts rather than pragmatically derived atomic concepts.

This area of pragmatics launches a collection of possible solutions to settle some of the current debates about the correct interpretation of some metaphorical definite descriptions (complete or not), metonymies, incomplete definite descriptions, and other phrases that encode second order concepts. Obviously, we will not try to unravel them all in this chapter; we just intend to raise the idea that

this part of pragmatics can take account of some pragmatic tasks that cannot be elucidated in the other sections of the discipline.

In what follows, in section 2, we first expound lexical pragmatics in relevance theory and pose some problems and limits of this approach. To overcome these problems and limits, in section 3, we propose that *ad hoc* concepts construction for complex concepts and enrichment of unarticulated constituents of concepts are needed. Both tasks are better studied from phrasal pragmatics, a field of pragmatics that focuses on the behaviour of phrases and their meanings.

## 2 Lexical pragmatics in relevance theory

Lexical pragmatics is currently a central point of interest in the different theories of underdetermination.<sup>4</sup> In Relevance Theory (RT), it is a rather new perspective. In the standard relevance theory, the pragmatic tasks in deriving the proposition(s) expressed by an utterance are: disambiguation, reference assignment<sup>5</sup> and enrichment (Sperber and Wilson 1986/95: 185). Now, a fourth pragmatic task is considered, as we can see in the following quote from Carston,

In chapter 5, I will suggest that there is a fourth pragmatic task involved in deriving the proposition expressed, that of *ad hoc* concept construction, which raises a host of new issues. (Carston 2002: 220n54).

The central aim of lexical pragmatics in RT is to account for *ad hoc* concept construction, to account for how lexicalized atomic concepts can, through pragmatic derivation, yield *ad hoc* atomic concepts. Relevance-theoretic lexical pragmatics is

concerned with the pragmatic sub-tasks involved in constructing *ad hoc* concepts. In particular, it is concerned with narrowing, broadening and a combination of the two.

Carston aims

to give a unitary account of how word meanings are adjusted in context, such that the outcome of that adjustment process may be a narrowing, a broadening, or a combination of the two (Carston 2005-unpublished).

One example of the type of adjustment that results in a narrowing is produced in the utterance (1)

- (1) [Ann had made it clear that she wanted to settle down and have children and Mary utters:] Ann wants to meet a *bachelor*.

In (1), the denotation of the communicated concept, BACHELOR\*, is a subset of the set of unmarried men, those who are prone to marriage. The other, putatively opposite, process of loosening or broadening of a lexicalized concept can be exemplified by the utterance (2). In (2),

- (2) [The speaker watched a disturbing movie and although it did not make him want to vomit, he utters:] That movie made me *sick*.

the denotation of the communicated concept, SICK\*, is the result of adjusting SICK to convey that a particular movie made him feel physically ill, although he did not want to vomit. An adjustment of meaning is required so that the denotation of ‘sick’

becomes wider. Metaphor, hyperbole, loose uses of lexical items, and so on are explained, from relevance-theoretic lexical pragmatics, as cases of broadening. Finally, an example of a combination of narrowing and broadening appears in the utterance (3)

- (3) [A, who knows Caroline of Monaco well, utters:] Caroline is our *princess*.

in which A, the speaker, is concerned about Caroline properties such as her haughty, spoilt ways and not about her status in a royal family (logical property of princesses). These properties reduce the denotation of the PRINCESS concept to a particular subset of the set of princesses: those who have haughty and spoilt ways. As her status in a royal family is irrelevant, the PRINCESS\* concept does not include the logical property of PRINCESS: being a female member of a royal family. Thus, its denotation is not only narrowed but also broadened to a set that includes female persons who are not members of a royal house and have haughty and spoilt ways.

To interpret (1)-(3), derived *ad hoc* atomic concepts (marked with asterisks) for the italicized words (*bachelor*, *sick*, and *princess*) are needed. The adjustment processes that result in narrowing and broadening are distinguished because they work in opposite directions, but the adjustments that they produce in the conceptual fine-tuning, the *ad hoc* atomic concepts, contribute to the explicature (truth-conditional content) of the utterance (they are not merely implicated).<sup>6</sup> In this way, lexical pragmatics focuses on the study of the pragmatic concepts that are of use to explain all the examples in which the atomic communicated concept that takes a

morphophonemic word as input and the lexicalized concept that codifies it do not coincide.<sup>7</sup>

## 2.1 Problems in relevance-theoretic lexical pragmatics

The first problem for relevance-theoretic lexical pragmatics is how to explain the possibility of a complete change in the denotation of a lexicalized concept. This problem can be shown with examples of metaphor such as a normal utterance of (4)

(4) Mary is a *bulldozer*.

in which the communicated concept, BULLDOZER\*, does not apply to bulldozers. BULLDOZER\* is not the result of adjusting BULLDOZER after the loss of some of its logical features because there are no encyclopaedic properties of bulldozers that can be literally applied to Mary. BULLDOZER\* acquires some properties instead and its denotation does not include bulldozers. Carston (2002) is aware of this problem which she calls ‘the emergent properties issue’.

Although we agree with relevance-theoretic lexical pragmatics in considering that metaphor needs for its interpretation the production of *ad hoc* concepts, we do not agree with appealing merely to the process of broadening to explain it. Our solution to the emergent properties issue depends on demonstrating against relevance theorists that metaphor is not the type of phenomenon that requires an inferential process of broadening for its interpretation (Romero and Soria 2005a, 2007). In metaphor, the metaphorical properties emerge from the properties that characterize the source domain, the bulldozer domain. Metaphor must be explained as a case of

transfer of meaning by a mapping from the source domain to the target domain (Black 1954; Indurkha 1986, 1992; Gineste et al. 2000; Romero and Soria 2005a). It should characteristically be described as a process by means of which the metaphorical concept does not only lose its logical properties but also the encyclopaedic properties, in the metaphorical concept only those properties that can change in such a way that can be applied to the objects we are talking about remain. The new properties are so different that the denotation of the concept changes completely. Lexical pragmatics should include the pragmatic task of transfer by mapping in the account of *ad hoc* concept construction to solve the problem of the emergent properties issue.<sup>8</sup> But then the unified theory would be at risk.

The second problem is related with metaphor too. If metaphor is a trope and thus only affects atomic lexicalized concepts, explained as cases of transfer (for us) or as cases of broadening (for Carston), how can we interpret (5) and (6)?

(5) [An American academic, Morris, goes to a British institution as a visiting professor and A says about him]: In all modesty Morris imagined he must be *the biggest fish in this backwater*.

(6) [In a department meeting, somebody who is a shy retiring person, goes out and Peter says:] Thank goodness, *the wilting violet* has finally left the room. (Adapted from example (21b) in Carston 1996)

The input of a trope is an atomic lexicalized concept. Nevertheless, the metaphorical interpretations of (5) and of (6) have a complex concept as input respectively. BIGGEST FISH IN THIS BACKWATER in (5) and WILTING VIOLET in (6) are the complex concepts that must be metaphorically adjusted to form the propositions expressed by

the utterances (5) and (6). Their metaphorical adjustments result in [BIGGEST FISH IN THIS BACKWATER]\* for the interpretation of (5) and in [WILTING VIOLET]\* for the interpretation of (6).

Our hypothesis is that in order to understand these examples we have to widen the scope over which certain inferential processes operate. If we understand that the processes of narrowing and/or broadening, and transfer by mapping can be applied to complex concepts expressed by means of phrases and not only to atomic concepts expressed by (mono-morphemic) lexical items, there are phenomena that can be better explained from what we call ‘phrasal pragmatics’. The input of processes of narrowing, broadening and transfer by mapping are concepts in general and not just atomic concepts.<sup>9</sup>

The third problem appears if we consider cases of referential metonymies. Metonymy, which is also traditionally considered as a trope, cannot be explained as a case of broadening either. Examples of metonymy such as (7)

- (7) [Looking at the ham sandwich customer, a waitress tells another:] The ham sandwich is waiting for his check.

remain unexplained in RT. The denotation of the HAM SANDWICH concept is not broadened to denote both ham sandwiches and customers because there are no encyclopaedic properties of ham sandwiches that, if applied to both, result in a relevant interpretation of the utterance.

Our solution, in these cases, is to argue that metonymy is not a trope but a case of missing constituents (Romero and Soria 2005b, forthcoming). The concept expressed by the first noun phrase included in (7), THE HAM SANDWICH, must be



completed as, for example, in THE HAM SANDWICH CUSTOMER. In phrase fragments we need the adding of the unarticulated conceptual constituent so that we get the complex concepts. In (7), the unarticulated constituent is CUSTOMER with which we get the pragmatically derived complex concept: THE HAM SANDWICH CUSTOMER. [HAM-SANDWICH]\* is not involved in the relevant interpretation of (7).

## 2.2 Limits in relevance-theoretic lexical pragmatics

Examples (1)-(3) require a pragmatic process by means of which linguistically encoded concepts are adjusted. Carston also recognizes that they differ from other examples in which, although encoded linguistic meaning also underdetermines the proposition expressed by the speaker, the pragmatic process required for interpreting them seems to involve the adding of conceptual constituents. The utterances (8)-(10)

- (8) [A realizes that B, when making his breakfast, is looking for the marmalade and A says:] On the top shelf. [**THE MARMALADE IS**]
- (9) [A asks B what the weather is like today and B answers:] It is raining. [**HERE**]
- (10) [A, in the middle of an unexpected traffic jam, says:] Something has happened today. [**SOMETHING BAD**]<sup>10</sup>

show that some pragmatic process of adding conceptual material (in bold) is needed in order to arrive at what the speaker intended to express. The utterance of a phrase such as (8) is the obvious case (Carston 2002: 17 and 22), in which the speaker, A, explicitly communicates that the marmalade is on the top shelf. However, there are

sentential utterances whose encoded meanings do not determine a fully propositional representation even after all necessary reference assignments and disambiguations have taken place. The utterance (9) requires to know where it is raining before it can be judged as true or false of a state of affairs. This information is not guided by a linguistic pointer but it is realized by means of a pragmatic process that can supply constituents to the explicature. Other sentential utterances seem to determine fully propositional representations, but they need contextual supplementation in identifying the proposition expressed. In the utterance (10) some pragmatic enrichment or adding of conceptual material is needed in order to arrive at what the speaker intended to express: SOMETHING BAD HAS HAPPENED ON THE DAY OF UTTERANCE. The normal utterances (8)-(10) are examples of missing constituents which cannot be explained with *ad hoc* atomic concepts.

The addition of a conceptual constituent is explained in relevance theory appealing to the Principle of Relevance. But at what level does the addition of conceptual material take place? Our hypothesis is that the adding of missing constituents takes place either at the level of phrase (as in (10)) or at the level of sentence (as in (8)-(9)) and this means that lexical pragmatics, which takes place at the level of word, is not the area of pragmatics in which this type of enrichment can be explained. When the adding of missing constituents takes place at the level of phrase, we need what we have called ‘phrasal pragmatics’.

### **3 Phrasal pragmatics**

Although we agree with the need of pragmatic tasks that operate at the level of lexical items, it is our contend here to argue for the fact that an intermediary level of

pragmatic adjustment is required between the pragmatics needed to convey intended propositions and the pragmatics needed to convey *ad hoc* atomic concepts.

Propositions have a complex nature, a compositional character. They are structured strings and have concepts (complex or not) as their constituents. Just by the fact that complex concepts are complex and thus, at least in part, compositionally determined, they are *ad hoc* (except in fossilized expressions). But, in Carston's account, we want to argue, derived complex concepts could also arise out of the pragmatic process of enrichment both in its version of addition of conceptual material and in the sense of concept strengthening or *ad hoc* concept construction.

With this picture in mind, we want to raise the idea that the pragmatic tasks needed in phrasal pragmatics to get communicated complex concepts are: (i) *ad hoc* concepts construction for complex concepts, and (ii) adding of missing (or unarticulated) constituents of concepts. The concepts obtained by these tasks are the constituents of the thoughts expressed by the utterances in which the phrases appear.

### **3.1 *Ad hoc* concepts construction for complex concepts**

As we said in section 2.1, the metaphorical uses of lexical items and phrases need for their interpretation the elaboration of *ad hoc* concepts. They are the results of transfer based on mapping. Sometimes, a complex concept is the point of departure for an *ad hoc* metaphorical concept. In (5),

- (5) [An American academic, Morris, goes to a British institution as a visiting professor and A says about him]: In all modesty Morris imagined he must be the *biggest fish in this backwater*.

‘biggest fish in this backwater’ needs fine-tuning as a whole, that is, the input of the pragmatic process involved in the metaphorical interpretation of (5) is the *ad hoc* concept BIGGEST FISH IN THIS BACKWATER. This is very different from considering FISH as an independent input of this pragmatic process. It is different in the sense that the result of this interpretation is the *ad hoc* concept, FISH\*. FISH\* would have some properties that can be applied to academics but these properties are irrelevant to understand the utterance. To interpret (5), the relevant metaphorical *ad hoc* concept is [BIGGEST FISH IN THIS BACKWATER]\*. This concept has cognitive effects that verify the presumption of optimal relevance of the utterance and that cannot be achieved by means of FISH\*. We are not interested in the general properties of FISH, but in the particular properties of BIGGEST FISH IN THIS BACKWATER. The particular properties of BIGGEST FISH IN THIS BACKWATER such as ‘eating smaller fishes’ when applied metaphorically to Morris permit to know how he is feeling. Only [BIGGEST FISH IN THIS BACKWATER]\* allows understanding how Morris is, to wit, the person who conceives himself as the most powerful academic in this British institution, while FISH\* doesn’t.

Similarly, the processes of broadening and narrowing typically applied to atomic concepts can also be applied to complex ones. Carston is conscious of this issue. Indeed she says:

Another possibility is that longer stretches of the encoded conceptual structure, phrases or the whole logical form, are to be taken loosely (metaphorically) and a complex (structured) *ad hoc* concept pragmatically

constructed on that basis. [...] This is clearly an issue that needs a lot more thought. (Carston 2002: 359)

That is what we have done: putting some thought on part of this issue, the one that has to do with complex *ad hoc* concepts conveyed by phrases. Obviously, then the point of disagreement between us is not the fact that phrases as a whole can be the input of *ad hoc* concept construction, but the way in which metaphor interpretation should be explained (see Romero and Soria 2007). What we want now is to focus on the second type of process that we propose from phrasal pragmatics.

### **3.2 Enrichment of unarticulated constituents of concepts**

We think that our proposal on enrichment of unarticulated constituents of concepts can be made totally coherent with Carston's picture of missing constituents. Our approach can be a way out for a problem not yet solved in Relevance theory: that of metonymy.

As we can convey a complete thought by means of an utterance of a sentence fragment (a non-sentence) such as (8) (see Stainton 1994) or a complete but not sufficiently explicit sentence such as (9) (see Bach 1994; Recanati 2004), we can also convey a complete complex concept by means of a fragment of a phrase such as 'something' in (10). In the first two cases, a pragmatic task is needed to add one or more constituents of the intended thought. Similarly, a pragmatic task is needed to add one or more conceptual constituents of a complex concept. We can distinguish between:

- (a) the cases in which the missing constituent is a constituent of a thought as the ones intended in (8)-(9), and
- (b) those in which the missing constituent is a constituent of a complex concept as the one intended when uttering the NP included in (10).

In RT, enrichment and its capability of adding missing constituents is one of the pragmatic tasks needed to go from the expression to the complete thought expressed by its utterance. In RT, missing conceptual constituents have been normally treated as missing constituents at the level of thought since the result of simply decoding the uttered expression would not result in a complete intended proposition. That is true, but we believe that there is a qualitative difference between cases (a) and (b). The former are directly incomplete while the latter are incomplete in an indirect way. The latter are incomplete only because one of the concepts is.

Propositions can be conveyed by means of a sentence fragment and RT can predict it as more appropriate, as we can see in the following quote,

The theory [RT] predicts that, in many contexts, a subsentential utterance will be more appropriate than a sentential one. (Carston 2002: 154)

Similarly, it can be said that RT can predict that, in many contexts, when one of the constituents of an explicature is a complex concept, it can be more appropriately conveyed by a fragment of the complex concept, by encoding one or more of the atomic concepts which are constituents of the complex nesting structure.

We can distinguish two cases of fragments of complex concepts. In some cases, the incomplete concept is represented by an incomplete structure. In examples such as (11) and (12),

(11) This is one of the oldest buildings in town, if not the oldest. [THE OLDEST BUILDING IN TOWN]

(12) [In a hairdresser's, a hairdresser tells another:] The fair-haired is waiting for her check [THE FAIR-HAIRED CUSTOMER]

at least the head, the obligatory element, of the NP is missing. In order to interpret them, we will have to add conceptual material (BUILDING IN TOWN and CUSTOMER). There are missing elements in the concept encoded by the phrase fragment, specific elements that can be easily understood by the interlocutor in context (linguistic and extralinguistic) and, thus, can be pragmatically recovered.

In other cases, the incomplete concept is represented by a complete structure that codifies a concept not intended by the speaker in isolation but included in the intended concept. It is especially in these cases that we have to appeal to a pragmatic task to complete it so that the thought is effectively communicated. Examples (7), (10), and (13)

(7) [Looking at the ham sandwich customer, a waitress tells another:] The ham sandwich is waiting for his check [THE HAM SANDWICH CUSTOMER]

(10) [A, in the middle of an unexpected traffic jam, says:] Something has happened today. [SOMETHING BAD]

- (13) [Peter has cleaned Mary's room and, when she is looking for her handout, she asks him where it is and he says:] When I cleaned your room, I did not touch the table. [THE ONLY TABLE IN MARY'S ROOM ]

show we need phrasal pragmatics for the cases in which we have to add unarticulated conceptual constituents at the level of phrases. We have to decode the concepts linguistically-specified by the phrase fragments and to relate these concepts to those unarticulated concepts that enrich the sub-propositional structures; concepts that if linguistically-expressed by words would be part of the phrase. The pragmatic enrichment of the concepts expressed by phrase fragments allows the recovery of these unarticulated constituents so that we get the complex concepts: THE HAM SANDWICH CUSTOMER, SOMETHING BAD, and THE ONLY TABLE IN MARY'S ROOM respectively. But HAM-SANDWICH\*, SOMETHING\*, TABLE\* are not involved in the relevant interpretation of the utterances of these sentences.

These examples represent phenomena widely studied by linguists and philosophers. (7) is a case of metonymy, (10) is a case that involves a quantifier, and (13) involves an incomplete definite description. Our proposal is that these examples could be better explained if they were understood as cases in which there were unarticulated constituents of concepts, although there are different types of them. An explanation of the different types of missing constituents of concepts is needed, as we will see, to account for how the pragmatic task of enrichment is applied in each case. This explanation, in our opinion, fits nicely in the relevance-theoretic account.

The questions now are: how to recognize that (7), (10), and (13) need the adding of constituents of a complex concept? and how are the missing conceptual constituents recovered? Let's analyse (7), a case of metonymy. For us (Romero and



Soria 2005b), the metonymic interpretation is triggered because metonymic utterances are identified when there are both a contextual abnormality and some unarticulated restricted conceptual material included in the intended nesting complex concept. In general, the contextual abnormality we refer to here must be understood as the use of an expression in an unusual linguistic or extra-linguistic context. In (7), the abnormality entails a breach of a semantic restriction, such as the need to have a subject with the features [+HUMAN] if we consider the predicate, since the subject has to be an entity that can be waiting for the check. In addition, to identify a metonymy we also have to detect some unarticulated restricted conceptual material: the concept expressed by the NP used abnormally, THE HAM SANDWICH, is identified as the restrictive conceptual modifier of an unarticulated restricted concept that is pragmatically mandated. Given the context of (7), there is no doubt that the waitress is talking about a type of entity that can be waiting for the bill, about a customer. THE HAM SANDWICH concept is recognized as the conceptual modifier restricting the concept CUSTOMER. Now, we can get a metonymic interpretation of (7), we can reconstruct the intended complex concept, THE HAM SANDWICH CUSTOMER, in which one pragmatically mandated and unarticulated concept has enriched the concept encoded. CUSTOMER is pragmatically mandated as it is the notional head of the intended concept and is unarticulated because it is part of the given information for the interlocutors in that context. In addition, we can determine what is explicated with the utterance (7), that THE HAM SANDWICH CUSTOMER IS WAITING FOR HIS CHECK. This proposition produces the positive cognitive effects to verify the optimal relevance since from this utterance the waitress will know which customer she has to give the check to. The unarticulated conceptual constituents added can be taken to arise from a relevance-driven inference based on general knowledge about, for

example, the kind of entities that can be waiting for the bill. Thus, our proposal of metonymy as a case of adding mandated unarticulated constituents of concepts at a phrasal level is compatible with the relevance-theoretic account (see Romero and Soria forthcoming).

Now, let's consider (13), an example that includes an incomplete definite description. In (13), if we consider the predicate concept TOUCH, we know that the NP 'the table' must be a singular term that refers to an entity that can be touched, that is, that the NP is a singular term (definite description). As it is quite obvious that there is no object that uniquely satisfies the noun phrase 'the table', the speaker of (13) cannot refer to an object with merely this expression. We are before an incomplete definite description, thus, something unarticulated is needed. To interpret an incomplete definite description, we have to add the unarticulated conceptual material which isolates the unique entity intended by the speaker and which usually contains some referential component sensitive to the context (see Neale 1990: 93-102). There is an enrichment of the encoded concept, THE TABLE. The unarticulated conceptual constituents are recoverable from a relevance-driven inference based on the accessibility of information. Given the context of (13), we have to add ONLY...IN MARY'S ROOM. When we recover the unarticulated constituents, we reconstruct the intended complex concept, THE ONLY TABLE IN MARY'S ROOM and we also determine what is explicated with the utterance (13): WHEN PETER CLEANED MARY'S ROOM, PETER DID NOT TOUCH THE ONLY TABLE IN MARY'S ROOM. This proposition produces the positive cognitive effects to verify the optimal relevance since from this utterance the hearer knows that Peter did not touch the unique table in Mary's room.<sup>11</sup>

Finally, let's consider (10) where there is an incomplete noun phrase in which only a quantifier appears. The adding of an unarticulated element of a concept is

required for its interpretation. In this sense, we agree with Carston's (2002: 26) explanation as a case of addition of conceptual material rather than with her analysis (2002: 324) in which she argues that it is a case of conceptual narrowing.

In our opinion, the second order concept encoded by 'something' in (10) has an implicit or hidden variable in its linguistic form. There is a need for saturation of the variable with a concept of a certain kind because of its interaction with the predicate. As the predicate 'has happened' encodes a concept that has events as its denotation, the variable must be saturated with the concept *EVENT*. The hearer not only recognizes this but also an incompleteness of the saturated concept. The denotation of the concept codified by 'has happened' is never empty, and since the concept *SOME EVENT* predicates of that concept merely that it is not empty, the proposition expressed cannot produce any positive cognitive effects to verify optimal relevance of utterance (10). Thus, the concept *SOME EVENT* must be incomplete. If, in addition, we take into account that 'something', 'nothing', 'someone', 'anyone', 'anything' and 'no-one' are pronouns that differ from other pronouns in the fact that they can take modifications (see Burton-Roberts 1986: 156), it can be argued that what is needed is the adding of the unarticulated conceptual material that enriches the concept decoded. If represented, the unarticulated conceptual material would be a modifier to determine the kind of event intended. The concept *SOME EVENT* would be freely enriched to get a certain kind of *EVENT*. At this point, the element to be added is given by the context which leads the hearer to think that the event we are talking about is bad, and that it caused the traffic jam. The intended complex concept is: *SOME BAD EVENT*. The context permits to add the concept that is involved in the intended complex concept and thus to determine what is explicated with utterance

(10): SOME BAD EVENT HAS HAPPENED ON THE DAY OF UTTERANCE. Cognitive effects are possible.

In sum, phrasal pragmatics is needed in Carston's programme both for the fine-tuning of certain phrasal units and for the adding of constituents of complex concepts. In her work, we have found evidence for a possible agreement with the first case but we would like to draw attention to the second. In the latter, comprehension is, as she says although applied at the propositional level, 'a pragmatic mind-reading exercise *par excellence*' (Carston 2002: 365).

#### **4 Conclusion**

The recognition of phrases as intermediary units between lexical items and sentences allows an account of the pragmatic processes needed to derive the complex concepts communicated by phrases. If we recognize complex concepts as a conceptual unit, we have the possibility of applying processes of broadening, narrowing or transfer to this unit as a whole, and of conveying complex concepts without articulating part of them linguistically. Phrasal pragmatics supplements lexical pragmatics in the general task of shaping the notion of explicature.

Phrasal pragmatics is an area from which to explore possible solutions for recalcitrant topics in the theory of truth-conditional pragmatics which cannot be solved from the recent discipline of lexical pragmatics. A clear example of this is metonymy. Nevertheless, a lot more work is needed to test and develop the ideas that we have proposed.

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## Notes

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<sup>2</sup> Other approaches leave the task focused in phrasal pragmatics unexplained. The modulation presented by Recanati (2004), for example, cannot explain the inferential task required to determine the contribution that phrases make to the truth-conditions of an utterance, although it can serve to determine the contribution that words make to them. In Recanati (2004: 136-7), enrichment, loosening and transfer are the cases of modulation that affect words. In these cases, enrichment must be understood as specification when the interpretation of an expression is involved. Enrichment is also the process involved in the recovery of unarticulated constituents, but the provision of unarticulated constituents is supposed to be a case of free enrichment in which it is the interpretation of the sentence that is enriched (Recanati 2004: 24-5). The intermediary position of phrase is not considered.

<sup>3</sup> The term ‘*ad hoc* concept’ was first used by Barsalou (1983), although there are important differences in the way Carston uses the term. For more information about these differences, see Carston (2002: 367).

<sup>4</sup> Blutner (1998) uses the term ‘underspecification’ instead.

<sup>5</sup> ‘Saturation’ in Carston (2002: 205).

<sup>6</sup> Nevertheless, in the original proposal of lexical pragmatics by Blutner (1998), the conceptual adjustments contribute to conversational implicature, and they are explained with a straightforward formulation of conversational implicature.

<sup>7</sup> Disambiguation and saturation are not involved in *ad hoc* atomic concepts production, no matter whether these pragmatic tasks take place at level of word, phrase or sentence.

<sup>8</sup> In relation to this, Recanati (2007: 163) says: ‘The extraction of generic structure is a form of loosening, but the apparition of emergent features is a form of enrichment, and the imaginary mixing of features from both the source of the target is the most characteristic property of metaphor. That property is, indeed, irreducible to loosening.’

<sup>9</sup> This hypothesis, the extension of the scope of application of the processes of narrowing and/or broadening, and transfer by mapping, is inspired in an alleged structural analogy between sentences and propositions. If we take into account that the meaning of lexemes can be adapted pragmatically and that sentences have as their immediate constituents phrases rather than simply lexemes, it is sensible to argue that complex concepts (expressed through phrases) can be pragmatically adjusted as well. The adjustment of lexicalized concepts to the context, explained by lexical pragmatics, may be needed for the composition of concepts expressed by phrases and these more complex concepts as a whole may also need adjustment to the context to fix their contribution to the explicit proposition. What we want to argue is that although the input of the processes studied in lexical pragmatics is always a concept, not always does it have to be an atomic concept.

<sup>10</sup> See Carston (2002: 26). By contrast, in Carston (2002: 324), this example is considered a case of *ad hoc* concept construction that has as a result the narrowed concept SOMETHING\*.

<sup>11</sup> The conceptual restriction of decoded concepts by incomplete definite descriptions cannot be understood as a case of narrowing of lexical items because in



the former the structure of the concept changes. Rather than having a conceptual change by means of additional descriptive material in an atomic concept, we have an extension of the conceptual structure by relating the decoded concept (atomic or not) with other concepts which typically are or contain some referential components sensitive to the context.