

Online Workshop Proposal

Title: “Figurativity, Rhetoric and the Study of Constructions”

February 27-28, 2027

Workshop organizers:

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Keynote speakers who have so far accepted our invitation:

Todd Oakley (Department of Cognitive Science, Case Western Reserve University, USA)

Randy Allen Harris (Department of English Language and Literature, University of Waterloo, Canada)

Ying Yuan (School of Foreign Languages, Soochow University, China)

Figurative mechanisms can be examined in different constructions, in discourse, and they reveal different stages of consciousness, “Because they directly activate semantics, tropes are rhetorical figures that guide our thoughts and shape our perceptions, sometimes condensing them, sometimes merging them, sometimes pushing them into extremes or oppositions, among their conceptual effects” (Harris 2023: 241). The workshop aims to bring together researchers working on the relationship between human cognitive operations and rhetorical practices.

Those of us who work on figurative mechanisms, central, marginal or neglected ones, necessarily delve into issues of grammatical constructions and sociocultural interaction. However, a rhetorical characterization of such instances seems indispensable. Rhetoric is inevitably linked to persuasive, argumentative and viewpointed discourse enabled by figurative language. Following Oakley (2009, 2011, 2023: 489), notions of attention management, framing and emotional disposition need to be taken into account.

Key topics we aim to explore, in the present workshop, though not limited to the ones below, are the following:

- What is the rhetorical effect on figurative constructions? How are intersubjectivity, empathy, engagement enabled?
- **Attention** can focus on present, past or future; realities can be factual or counterfactual.
- How does **framing** which includes rich encyclopedic and linguistic knowledge guides our thoughts and language?
- **Emotions** are naturally expressed by means of figurative mechanisms. Apart from being biological and cultural descriptions, what is their impact in reasoning?
- It is said there are **four master tropes**, metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche and irony. What about the rest? Are they rhetorical devices only? Will allegory,

anadiplosis, antimetabole, litotes, paronomasia, ... among many others be treated as rhetorical devices only? Or will there be an attempt to investigate their cognitive need and impact? (Athanasiadou 2023)

- Could we provide an answer as to what mechanism irony is? (e.g., Gibbs & Colston 2007, 2023; Athanasiadou & Colston 2017, 2020) In addition to irony (Tobin & Israel 2012), simile (Dancygier 2022) and rhetorical question (Xiang 2023), what other figures also involve a viewpoint configuration?
- Figures are named tropes, moves, schemes or strategies. Is it only a terminological issue?
- Will figures be said to form subordinate entities under a superordinate “mega”-figure? For instance, metonymy, synecdoche, and their frames: what is the distinctive line between the three?
- Can we have a close association between cognitive mechanisms and rhetorical reasoning?
- Can grammaticality and rhetoric be bridged? What effects can be achieved through the rhetorical use of grammatical constructions?
- How do figures interact with each other in a rhetorical discourse?

Proposals for abstracts (not more than 300 words) are encouraged both descriptive and/or theoretical, that could account for the broader picture in conceptualization, expression and interpretation of the rhetorical effect on figurative constructions.

Presentations will be no longer than 20 minutes.

There is no registration fee.

Let us know if you would be interested in participating and, if so, please send us your abstract **by January 31, 2027**. Then you will be informed on the details of the online platform we will be using.

Should you have any further inquiries, do not hesitate to contact us (angath@enl.auth.gr) and (wesleyxmj@vip.163.com)

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Athanasiadou, A., & Colston, H. L. (Eds.). (2017). *Irony in Language Use and Communication*. John Benjamins.

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Gibbs, R. W., Jr., & Colston, H. L. (Eds.). (2007). *Irony in Language and Thought A Cognitive Science Reader*. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

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Harris, R. A. 2023. The Tropes. Metaphor and Its Friends. In: J. Fahnestock & R. A. Harris (Eds.) *The Routledge Handbook of Language and Persuasion*, 227-245.

- Oakley, T. (2009). *From Attention to Meaning: Explorations in Semiotics, Linguistics, and Rhetoric*. Peter Lang.
- Oakley, T. (2011). Attention and Rhetoric. In: C. Meyer & F. Girke (Eds.), *The Rhetorical Emergence of Culture*, 282-303.
- Oakley, T. 2023. Grounding Cognition. Intersections of Rhetorical Theory and Cognitive Science. In: J. Fahnestock & R. A. Harris (Eds.) *The Routledge Handbook of Language and Persuasion*, 488-502.
- Tobin, V., & Israel, M. (2012). Irony as a Viewpoint Phenomenon. In: B. Dancygier & E. Sweetser (Eds.), *Viewpoint in Language: A Multimodal Perspective*, 25-46.
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