



Figurative Language – Intersubjectivity and Usage, Augusto Soares da Silva (Ed.)

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Figurative Language - Intersubjectivity and Usage is a book edited by Augusto Soares da Silva, from the Universidade Católica Portuguesa of Braga, and published in 2021 by John Benjamins. It is the 11th volume of the series *Figurative Thought and Language*, and it stemmed from the 4th International Conference on Figurative Thought and Language, held at the editor's university in October 2018. The publication presents an interdisciplinary account of usage-based approaches to figurative language and intersubjectivity. As explained by the editor, numerous studies have shown the intrinsic relationship between figurative thought and language in human cognition, particularly through the framework of Cognitive Linguistics. Indeed, much attention has been paid to figures such as metaphor and metonymy from a cognitive linguistic perspective since the emergence of Lakoff and Johnson's Conceptual Metaphor Theory (LAKOFF; JOHNSON, 1980), and a great deal of changes have been implemented during the last decade. The two key developments that lay the foundations of the present volume are the *social* theoretical *turn* and the *empirical* methodological *turn* in Cognitive Linguistics. Firstly, usage-based socio-cognitive studies have been demonstrating how metaphors, metonymies, and other less studied figures such as irony are *socio-culturally situated* and *intersubjectively grounded* cognitive phenomena, hence sensitive to culture, society, and history. Secondly, empirical research using multivariate quantitative methodologies have been facilitating the understanding of these figures and their synchronic, diachronic, and socio-cultural dimensions. The present volume is thus framed in this new era of developments in Cognitive Linguistics. Its thirteen chapters provide original contributions that dive into the cultural and social dimensions of figurative and non-figurative language and that apply various empirical methods to study the interpersonal nature of language and to evidence the importance of taking the *sociosemiotic commitment* (GEERAERTS, 2016) in Cognitive Linguistics.

The volume is divided into three parts. The first part contains four chapters that deal with the (mostly theoretical) study of intersubjectivity and interaction in the following cognitive phenomena: second-order empathy and irony (chapter 1), metaphor (chapters 2 and 3),



metaphoremes (chapter 2), and humour (chapter 4). The second part presents four chapters that discuss different processes and mechanisms in figurative thought and language, particularly metaphor/irony mixing (chapter 5), metonymy (chapter 6), verbal and situational irony (chapter 7), and marked ambiguation (chapter 8). The third and final part gathers five chapters that examine the socio-cultural and socio-historic variation and usage of an array of figures, including metaphor (chapters 9, 10, 11 and 13), metonymy (chapters 9 and 10), idioms (chapter 10), and humour (chapter 12). As the upcoming discussion will show, this volume greatly enriches the growing body of research on figurative language, since each of its thirteen chapters covers important gaps and opens up new and promising directions in the literature.

Chapter 1 (Geeraerts) investigates the unexplored intersubjective cognitive phenomenon of second-order empathy (i.e., “the ability of Self to take into account Other’s point of view as including a view of Self”, p.19) and its relationship with the linguistic phenomenon of pragmatic ambiguity from a philosophical, conceptual, usage-based perspective. By connecting notions from Cognitive Linguistics, Psychology, Pragmatics, and Phenomenology, the study suggests how second-order empathy could motivate linguistic miscommunication in a wide range of situations, some of them involving the use of irony and hyperbole.

Chapter 2 (Zlatev, Jacobsson and Paju) presents a unique theoretical contribution to metaphor research that not only proposes a set of desiderata in cognitive metaphor theory, but also a cognitive-semiotic theory that aims to encompass all these desiderata, namely, the *Motivation & Sedimentation Model* (MSM). This model is described through the analysis of *metaphoremes* (motion-emotion metaphors) in six differently related European languages, and examples include both verbal and pictorial metaphors. MSM is influenced by Integral Linguistics and, like chapter 1, by Phenomenology. To explain the model, the authors apply a complex methodology that consists in the triangulation of first-person (for example, native speakers’ intuitions), second-person (for example, intersubjective validation), and third-person (for example, *corpus*) methods. Overall, the proposed desiderata capture essential problems in Conceptual Metaphor Theory, and MSM thus comes forward as both a potential unified framework and an intersubjective model in which embodied and social cognitive phenomena lie at the core of metaphor communication and comprehension.

Chapters 3 (Colston) and 4 (Brône) demonstrate how quantitative and qualitative experimental psycholinguistic methods can help to shed light on the processing and interaction of figures, particularly metaphor (chapter 3) and irony/humour (chapter 4). In chapter 3, Colston presents four experiments that test a set of predictions regarding the effect of *meaning enhancement* of metaphors, and the potential of this pragmatic effect as an evaluation tool for different metaphor comprehension accounts. The five metaphor accounts examined in this chapter are those based on similarity, categorisation, conceptual metaphor, blending and embodied simulation. The results show that metaphors significantly enhance meaning in comparison to non-metaphorical utterances, and support the account based on embodied simulations the most. With regard to chapter 4 (Brône), it presents an eye-tracking study that shows the complexity of the role of eye gaze in humorous and/or ironic interactions. From a methodological viewpoint, the experiment uses a Dutch multimodal video corpus of three-



party interactions to perform a micro-analysis of selected sequences. Both chapters thus address two different gaps in the literature, namely, the potential of meaning enhancement by metaphors, and the role of eye gaze in humour.

In chapter 5, the first chapter of the second part of the volume, Barnden investigates the processing of metaphor/irony mixing. The chapter firstly explains the complexities that both metaphor and irony processing have individually, and then addresses the aspects that arise when these figures are mixed (with respect to the hearer's processing), looking at temporal ordering or *dependence direction* as a whole. Based on the suggestion that the desirable ordering of the mixture of these figures is "somewhat messy, mixed-up" (p. 141), the author considers both *irony-upon-metaphor* and *metaphor-upon-irony* dependence directions in the analysis of the examples. Although most of the examples presented in this study lean towards the irony-upon-metaphor dependence direction, there is one that does not. Hence, despite existing claims in the literature that metaphor-upon-irony analysis cannot appropriately account for the accompanying attitude, Barnden challenges these arguments by considering the transfer of attitude in the metaphorical transformation of ironic meaning, thus opening up a new direction in the field of figurative language processing.

Chapter 6 (Brdar-Szabó and Brdar) comprises a theoretical study of metonymy mixing and massing or, in other words, metonymic complexity. This chapter specifically tackles *metonymic indeterminacy*, which, as explained by the authors, arises when a single metonymic vehicle can be simultaneously linked to more than one metonymic target. Three subcases of metonymic indeterminacy are analysed in detail, namely, sylleptic indeterminacy, complementary indeterminacy, and genuine metonymic indeterminacy in context or metaleptic indeterminacy (derived from the narratological notion of *metalepsis* or *metaleptic transgression*). Numerous examples are provided to explain each of these subcases and, throughout the analysis, the importance of the context in metonymic complexity is made apparent. The authors argue that metonymic indeterminacy is "by no means a marginal phenomenon" (p. 204), and that it makes discourse more cohesive by leaving space for dynamic and fluid meaning construal. Therefore, this chapter makes another original contribution to the field of figurative language processing by addressing the little-studied phenomenon of metonymic indeterminacy from a usage-based cognitive perspective.

Chapter 7 (Ruiz de Mendoza and Lozano-Palacio) proposes a unified framework for the study of irony, including both verbal and situational irony. The framework is based on the *scenario-based account*, defined by the authors as an approach that considers ironic echoes as "cognitive operations used to build internally coherent conceptual scenarios in combination with other cognitive operations" (p. 214). This approach incorporates the notion of *epistemic scenario*, and it is argued that ironic meaning arises from the clash between an epistemic and an *observable* scenario. While in verbal irony the epistemic scenario is based on a pretended agreement of the ironist, in situational irony it is grounded on a solid assumption about the nature of a state of affairs, which clashes with the observable scenario. Overall, the authors provide a clear, concise, and well-grounded revision of current approaches to irony, and their unified framework fruitfully addresses the multi-dimensional intersubjective nature of this complex figure.



Part II of the book is closed with chapter 8 (Givoni, Bergerbest and Giora). This chapter addresses an experimental psycholinguistic study on *ambiguation* that aims at testing the *Low-Salience Marking Hypothesis*, which hypothesises that ambiguity markers boost meanings low on salience. Ambiguation is understood as the output of the processing mechanism that results in more than one accessible and relevant meaning, taken together. More specifically, the authors concentrate on *marked* ambiguation, which occurs when ambiguation instances are preceded by cues, such as ‘pun intended’. This is an understudied phenomenon in the figurative language processing and lexical access literature, and its relationship with polysemy, humour and irony clearly enrich the present volume. To test the Low-Salience Marking Hypothesis, two psycholinguistic experiments are carried out. The results of the first offline experiment show that low-salience markings boost low-salience meanings, and those of the second online experiment demonstrate that marked (mostly figurative) polysemy facilitates the access to additional meanings of the ambiguous expression. Hence, the Low-Salience Marking Hypothesis is validated.

The third part of the volume begins with chapter 9 (Allan). The chapter highlights the importance of considering the semantic history of a word when analysing the relationship between its (figurative and non-figurative) senses. Through a historical semantic analysis of the lexeme *dull*, Allan dives into its multiple figurative and non-figurative meanings, shifts in the course of history and shows that its two basic meanings, i.e., ‘not bright’ and ‘not sharp’, come from abstract rather than concrete domains. As a result, the author demonstrates that taking history into account when deciding the basic sense of a figurative expression can potentially avoid misinterpretations as well as help to solve semantic puzzles. This chapter thus illustrates how a socio-historic, usage-based diachronic approach can help to better grasp figurative meaning variation.

Going back to Psycholinguistics, chapter 10 (Carrol) brings up a theoretical review that posits the benefits of using experimental psycholinguistic techniques in the study of figurative language. Current models and methods are examined, particularly *cross-modal priming* and *eye-tracking*, and their applications in the analysis of idioms, metaphors, metonymies, and other figures are discussed. The cross-modal priming and eye-tracking studies considered by Carrol focus, in broad terms, on the processing and predictability of idioms in several contexts, including language learning contexts, as well as on the familiarity and aptness of metaphors. Overall, this chapter shows the importance of familiarity and conventionality in figurative language processing and raises awareness of the fact that a wide range of speaker variables must be contemplated when analysing this processing.

In chapter 11, Vereza presents a theoretical study that aims to clarify the distinction between *conceptual* and *situated metaphors* and systematise their analysis from a usage-based, cognitive-discursive perspective. On a broad scale, this chapter not only tries to move away from the *metaphor wars* (Gibbs, 2017) and to challenge the “quest for conceptual metaphors” (p. 340) in cognitive-discursive approaches to metaphor, but also to explain the interaction between the cognitive and discursive dimensions of metaphor. To fulfil this aim, an integrated approach that distinguishes between two theoretical levels in metaphor analysis, i.e., the level of *off-*



line representations, like conceptual metaphors, and that of *on-line* conceptualisations, such as situated metaphors, is proposed. To better understand this two-level distinction, situated metaphors are compared to conceptual, systematic, and linguistic metaphors, and the interaction of the levels is illustrated by an analysis of a *metaphor niche* that revolves around the *work is water* situated metaphor. The author finally points to the need to analyse how local mappings may help to construct viewpoints by highlighting specific features of the source domain and hiding others. All in all, this chapter puts forward another attempt to unify some of the basic notions in Conceptual Metaphor Theory, like chapter 2 (Zlatev, Jacobsson and Paju).

Chapter 12 (Winter-Froemel) focuses on the sources of humorous figurative and non-figurative lexical items and, more specifically, on *incongruity*, from the perspectives of lexicography and humour studies. This chapter thus addresses a gap in the literature, namely, the systematic analysis of verbal humour in the lexicon, particularly in relation to lexical innovation and change. Through an examination of humorous lexicon in French and Italian, Winter-Froemel provides explanations of the sources of verbal humour in general, as well as of language-specific tendencies and divergences in the sources of this ludic usage of lexicon. In fact, an interactional semiotic framework that accounts for these explanations and that considers the semantic and pragmatic aspects of incongruity is proposed, and six subtypes of incongruity are derived from the analysis, all sources of verbal humour.

The final chapter of the book (Soares da Silva) presents a corpus-based and profile-based socio-cognitive study on the impact of metaphor in the sociocultural variability of two emotions, namely, anger and pride, in European and Brazilian Portuguese. The basic tenet of this study is that emotions are socially and culturally variable, despite their bodily physiological grounding. Therefore, considering the *pluricentricity* of Portuguese, differences between Brazilian and Portuguese societies are expected with regard to the experiencing and conceptualisation of anger and pride. In this study, the role of collectivistic and individualistic cultural influences in the figurative and non-figurative conceptualisation of these emotions are especially considered. The analyses performed in this chapter (i.e., multifactorial usage-feature and profile analysis, and metaphorical pattern analysis) demonstrate the socio-cultural, usage-based grounding of the figurative and non-figurative conceptualisations of emotions, as the results point to both strong similarities and subtle but relevant differences in the cultural variation of usage-feature clusters and metaphorical profiles of anger and pride.

As shown above, this volume stands out for its interdisciplinarity and originality. Based on usage-based approaches to figurative language and intersubjectivity, each of the chapters provides its own innovative insights around the interaction, processing, variation, and representation of figures. Indeed, the book offers a unique dialogue space between theories and models within Cognitive Linguistics and other frameworks such as Psycholinguistics, Phenomenology, Psychology, and Discourse Analysis, as well as between methodologies, including empiric quantitative methods as well as qualitative conceptual, descriptive, experimental, and corpus linguistic methods. This dialogue space deeply broadens the discussion and widens the knowledge on figurative language and intersubjectivity, and the inclusion of multiple languages and semiotic resources in the exploration of the figures turns this book into a highly valuable



contribution. However, two minor caveats may be noted in the present volume. The first one is its structural organisation. As acknowledged in the book Introduction (Soares da Silva), the research topics used to divide the volume into three parts are “not restricted to their respective section but may also be found in other contributions” (p. 5), which is inevitable in any complex, interdisciplinary work. Nevertheless, it is sometimes difficult to perceive the coherence of the book parts, as the topics are rather vague and ambiguous and the ordering of the chapters within each of the parts does not seem to follow any specific criteria. The second limitation is the small number of case studies. Most of the chapters adopt a theoretical rather than an applied approach. Be that as it may, the theoretical studies presented in this volume deal with important challenges and gaps in the literature, and they contribute to (partially) solve the lack of systematicity and consensus in figurative language research by suggesting some systematic ways of analysing and understanding figures. Chapters 2 (Zlatev, Jacobsson and Paju), 7 (Ruiz de Mendoza and Lozano-Palacio), and 11 (Vereza) exemplify this argument, as they provide unified frameworks that help to bridge divergent views in metaphor (chapters 2 and 11) and irony (chapter 7) research.

The well-founded and well-argued theoretical models and frameworks that account for the interaction, processing, and usage of figures included in this book provide excellent grounds for future case studies. For instance, it would be interesting to apply the proposed models to the study of figurative language in digital contexts, including social media interactions. In addition, it would be useful not only to develop and test the different theories and methods discussed in the chapters separately, but also to look at the possible dialogue between them. In conclusion, this volume is a highly recommendable interdisciplinary contribution that provides clear, original, theoretical and empiric multi-faceted analyses of the interweaving of intersubjectivity and figurative language from a usage-based approach, and that opens the door for future research, inviting researchers to take the social and quantitative turns in the cognitive linguistic study of figuration and intersubjectivity.

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