

Abstracts Interdisciplinary Workshop Stylistics

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1. **Writers' minds, readers minds, and characters' minds**

Eve Sweetser, University of California, Berkeley

A growing number of literary scholars seem to embrace the understanding that literary texts are written and read by not just acculturated but also embodied human minds; and at least some cognitive linguists are now embracing the challenge of complex literary texts to linguistic theory. In a way, therefore, we are finally back to Jakobson's endeavor to bring literary and cognitive linguistic work together; but we have both a more advanced cognitive science and a more advanced linguistic theory than he did. I would like to discuss several cases where, in different ways, metaphor theory, mental space blending theory, and modern pragmatic theory have contributed to my understanding of literary texts (I will mention Austen, Shakespeare, Trollope and Rostand). I will suggest ways in which mental spaces theory in particular can represent aspects of embedded viewpoint which are hard to represent in other models. And I will further argue that far from competing with historical or cultural models of literary analysis, these linguistic approaches are complementary to them, and indeed can be revealing about the cultural side of literary works; pragmatic analysis of the tacit conversational rules of Austen's characters, for example, yields insights into the writer's mind as well.

Eve Sweetser is professor of Linguistics at UC Berkeley and former president of the International Cognitive Linguistics Association (ICLA). She received her PhD from UC Berkeley in 1984. She has published many articles on topics including modality, polysemy, metaphor, conditional constructions, gesture, and literary analysis. One of her major publications is *From etymology to pragmatics, Metaphorical and cultural aspects of semantic structure* (1990). Her most recent book is the comprehensive study *Mental Spaces in Grammar* (2005), with Barbara Dancygier.

2. **Style in cognitive linguistics: the perspective from genre**

Gerard Steen, VU University Amsterdam

Style is a matter of performance, and concerns the same activity performed in recognizably distinct ways. For language use, style therefore involves two basic aspects:

1. a specific selection of linguistic means for communication from a larger repertoire of linguistic possibilities, as well as
2. a degree of patterning of the specific selection of linguistic means into a determinate variety of the activity – a language variety.

In linguistics, style has moreover been distinguished from other varieties of language use like dialect, sociolect, and register. The latter are macro-varieties whereas style is a micro-variety,

which suggests that there is also a question of scale. When modeling style, we therefore have to take into account the following questions:

1. what is the appropriate level of ‘same activity’?
2. how can the specific selection of linguistic means be precisely demarcated from other selections?
3. what is the larger repertoire of linguistic means from which various styles can be drawn?
4. where does the level of style as a micro-level of systematic linguistic variation stop, and where does the macro-level of linguistic variety proper begin?

The answer to these questions, I argue, should be given from the perspective of genre. Genre may be conceptualized in various ways, but from a cognitive-scientific or cognitive-linguistic angle, people co-construct instantiations of genres when they engage in linguistic and communicative performance. Genres may hence be studied as cognitive models that language users employ when participating in discourse.

Generally, language and language varieties in usage can be seen as reflections of the various properties of genres. In particular, they constitute the expression and impression of aspects of text and context pertaining to genre. Style is the limiting case of such a concrete and recognizable language variety. In my talk, I will elaborate on these points in various theoretical and empirical ways.

Gerard Steen is professor of language use and cognition at VU University Amsterdam. He is director of the research program ‘Language, Cognition, Communication’, which is part of the new interfaculty research institute CAMeRA, Center for Advanced Media Research Amsterdam. He is also director of the NWO VICI program ‘Metaphor in discourse’, and coordinator of the Praggeljaz Group, an international group of metaphor researchers sponsored by NWO and the British Academy. Professor Steen’s main research interests are metaphor, style, register, genre, and literature. His most recent publication is *Finding metaphor in grammar and usage: A methodological analysis of theory and research*, with John Benjamins.

3. **‘And you think anyone would believe that?’ On how presentation can be instrumental in bypassing discussion issues**
Yvon Tonnard (University of Amsterdam)

One of the ways to avoid a discussion about a certain standpoint, is by asking a question like ‘and you think anyone would believe that?’ In this presentation I will discuss these types of responses to a standpoint within the framework of pragma-dialectics and try to answer why they can be considered a way of ‘strategic manoeuvring’. By manoeuvring strategically, arguers attempt to keep a balance between maintaining certain standards of reasonableness and furthering their own case. In particular, I am interested in the role that presentational devices play in this endeavour. By making use of speech act theory it can be illustrated how the use of specific presentational devices makes it possible to achieve this reconciliation of goals.

Yvon Tonnard started in 2006 as a PhD student with the department of *Speech communication, argumentation theory and rhetoric* of the University of Amsterdam. From 1994 till 2000 she studied Dutch language and literature (specialization Speech communication) at the same university. In her dissertation, she answers the question of how specific ways of strategic manoeuvring aimed at shutting the opponent's standpoint out of the discussion can be identified by their stylistic characteristics. This research is part of the NWO-project *Strategic manoeuvring in argumentative confrontations* that started in 2005.

4. **Meaning as active construal and interactive coordination: analysing conversational humour**

Kurt Feyaerts (K.U. Leuven, Belgium)

This paper focuses on specific types of humorous language use and aligns with the basic cognitive linguistic observation that meaning is a dynamic process of conceptualisation, which can be characterised by the activation of several mechanisms of cognitive construal. In his study of conversational (adversarial) humour, Brône (2007; in press) shows that meaning (analysis) essentially involves a social dimension as well, thus supporting Clark's (1996) view of language as a *joint action*. I will discuss several examples of conversational humour in terms of 'de-automatisation' effects which can be observed on the level of specific construal operations (metonymy, subjectification) as well as in the process of meaning negotiation among interlocutors (layering).

Literature:

- G. Brône (2007). *Bedeutungskonstitution in verbalem Humor. Ein kognitiv-linguistischer und diskurssemantischer Ansatz*, PhD. thesis, K.U. Leuven.
- G. Brône (in press). Hyper- and misunderstanding in interactional humor. *Journal of Pragmatics*.
- H. Clark (1996). *Using Language*. Cambridge/New York, Cambridge University Press.

Kurt Feyaerts is associate professor for German Linguistics at the University of Leuven and teaches courses in German Linguistics, Humour & Creativity and Lexical Semantics. His main research interests are in linguistic humour & creativity, patterns of conceptualization (metaphor, metonymy, blending) and interactional meaning. He is currently supervising a funded research project ('LCID: Linguistic Creativity in Discourse', 2007-2011) on the semantics of creative interruptive call outs in parliamentary debates. Since 2003, he is coordinator of the CHIL-research unit at the Department of Linguistics in Leuven: 'Creativity, Humour & Imagery in Language' (<http://www.ling.arts.kuleuven.be/chil/>)

5. **Attribute framing as a discourse phenomenon, Its use and its cognitive foundations** *Bregje Holleman and Henk Pander Maat (Utrecht University)*

When we use verbal information to evaluate objects or events or to base our decisions on, we are very likely to be influenced by the frame of the information. A course described in positive terms

(i.e. a 90% success rate) will be evaluated more positively than a course described in negative terms (a 10% fail rate). This is the type of phenomenon we aim to explain.

The general idea in framing research is that logically equivalent frames lead to different choices. The question is, however, whether logical equivalence implies informational (or communicative) equivalence. Sher & McKenzie (2006) show that different frames 'leak' different information to the reader or listener: valenced descriptions leak information to the receiver about perceived valence of the speaker. They demonstrate, for example, that speakers tend to choose a frame in which the value is increased compared to a prior state. In their experimental scenario: people describe a glass as 'half full' if it was less full before, but choose 'half empty' when it has been fuller (less empty). Likewise, when asked for a half full glass, they tend to hand over a glass that has been half filled, not a glass that has been half emptied; the reverse pattern was found for subjects that were asked for a half empty glass.

The approach of Sher & McKenzie is interesting because it looks upon framing effects not as an example of sloppy reasoning, but as a communicative phenomenon. This perspective invites explanations of framing effects in terms of semantic and pragmatic features of the linguistic expressions employed in different frames. For instance, the difference between half full and half empty could be conceptualized with the help of the cognitive semantic notions of profile and base: half full profiles presence against a base of absence, while the other expression reverses this relation (Croft & Cruse 2004, 14-18). But more general pragmatic mechanisms relating to relevance appear to play a role here as well.

In the work discussed here we replicate and extend the research by Sher & McKenzie. We designed new production and inference tasks to examine the tendency that increasing proportions will be chosen as the frame. Sher & McKenzie also suggest that 'good' things will be described in terms of a positive frame and bad things in terms of a negative frame. We would like to call this argumentative relevance, and we found support for this kind of relevance in a number of different scenarios. Besides these two rules, at least one other tendency seems to be at work: the preference for 'unmarked' ways of speaking. An example of an unmarkedness effect is the preference to use the positive frame (full vs empty, success rate vs fail rate), leading to an asymmetry in the choices.

Bregje Holleman is an Assistant Professor at the Department of Dutch and the Utrecht Institute of Linguistics OTS at Utrecht University. Her research and teaching focuses on language use and cognitive processes of text interpretation. Her main research interests are how question wording in attitude surveys affects the answers, and framing effects.

Henk Pander Maat is an Associate Professor at the Department of Dutch and the Utrecht Institute of Linguistics OTS at Utrecht University. At the moment his research and teaching focuses on discourse coherence, readability and comprehensibility of text and framing effects.

6. **Approaches to style in literature and rhetoric studies, An introduction to the NWO research project *Stylistics of Dutch***
Maarten van Leeuwen and Suzanne de Werd (Leiden University)

On the basis of our research in the past couple of months, we will focus on problematic aspects in the history of the study of style in the Netherlands. Suzanne will try to answer the question why

stylistics never became a full-fledged discipline in Netherlandic literary studies. She will point out a few factors that have contributed to the marginal position of stylistic research of literary texts. Maarten's research is on the style of speeches. He will discuss a few existing methods of stylistic analysis in this area and focus on strengths and weaknesses of these approaches. This will lead to a few points of interest which will have to be taken into account in the development of a method for critically analyzing the style of speeches.

Maarten van Leeuwen (rhetoric) and **Suzanne de Werd** (literature) started their PhD-studies in september 2007. Their research is part of the NWO project *Stylistics of Dutch* (Leiden, 2007-2012) under the direction of Arie Verhagen. The aim of this project is to join knowledge and insights from linguistics, literary analysis and rhetoric, for the purpose of developing a set of methods for the stylistic investigation of any type of text in Dutch. Maarten's dissertation will be on non-literary texts (speeches), whereas Suzanne will study literary texts (novels). Maarten studied Dutch language and culture (specialization linguistics) in Leiden from 2000 till 2006; Suzanne studied Dutch language and culture (specialization modern literature) and philosophy in Leiden from 1997 until 2004.