

Theme Session Proposal

“How to Conceptualize Communicative Ironies: Radial Category, Family Resemblance, Parallel Evolution...?”

Theme session organizers: Angeliki Athanasiadou & Herbert L. Colston

9th International Conference on Figurative Thought and Language
(FTL 9)

Faculty of Philology, Translation and Communication
University of Valencia (Spain)

<https://cogclare.com/ftl9/>

09-Sep-2026 - 11-Sep-2026

This theme session continues the discussion that began in various events¹ and lately in the online workshop, 4-5 October 2025, entitled “The Figure of Irony revisited” in which the multifaceted and varied nature of irony was reestablished, its pervasive character in thought and language was reconfirmed, though, as expected, more facets were deemed necessary for further theoretical and empirical investigation.

The present theme session once again aims to extend the discussion of irony in figurative thought and language, eventually approaching irony as a broad family with members such as sarcasm, satire, antiphrasis, parody,... ; and investigating its link(s) to overstatement and understatement, to allegory, and to other extensions closer or remotely approaching irony. Based on parameters that would constitute irony a central member of the family, is it possible to say that verbal irony is the central figure? In which ways are the other members linked to irony? What characteristics enable such a collection of things? These are some of the questions this theme session hopes to address.

The study of more peripheral members of the family which receive less attention might advance research of the figure of irony and might provide more of an overall coherent view of irony’s character and extent.

The central aim is to develop an enhanced understanding of the term *verbal irony* by providing in-depth analyses of relevant conceptual structure and functioning; in this approach, verbal irony conveys much more than simply reversal of values or, generally, a departure from literal meaning.

The study of ironic construals, for instance, could embrace central issues such as viewpoint, perspective shift, embodiment, deixis and deictic shift, subjectivity and subjectification, among others.

¹ ICLC 13 and ICLC 14, publications of selected papers in *Irony in Language Use and Communication* 2017 (A. Athanasiadou and H. Colston (Eds.), J. Benjamins FTL1, *The Diversity of Irony* 2020 (A. Athanasiadou and H. Colston (Eds.), CLR 65 Mouton de Gruyter.

As for constructions that facilitate the expression of ironic construals, what is the role of negatives, interrogatives, conditionals? What is the role of adjectives or intensifiers, or of *of*-constructions?

Some key questions we aim to explore, apart from or together with the ones of the online workshop,² include the following:

- Are figures such as satire, sarcasm subordinate to central (satiric[al] irony, sarcastic irony) or do they have an independent status?
- In case they have a peripheral status, can they be situated on a continuum which ranges from locations towards or farther from irony or on some other relevant dimension(s)?
- What conceptual tools/constructs are needed to fully define verbal irony? In particular, should it be treated in terms of frames, domains or mental spaces, or explained as the result of cognitive operations such as echoing?
- How do cognitive grammar and construction grammar contribute to an in-depth understanding of irony?
- What are the sociocultural and affective factors that motivate the creation and usage of figures such as allegory, fables, ...?
- What is the role of verbal irony in viewpoint, in the shifting of perspective, in deictic shift, in subjectivity, guiding pragmatic inference or in any effect leveraging?

Let us know if you would be interested in participating and, if so, for now please send us your name(s) and a tentative title of your presentation. The theme session proposal with paper titles and presenters will be submitted by February 15th to FTL conference organizers. You can later submit your abstract individually, by March 31st.

² production and interpretation of irony; verbal and/or situational irony; types of irony: Socratic irony, dramatic irony, irony of fate, each one influencing its study in linguistics and psycholinguistics; also irony and pragmatic functions in various sociocultural contexts, like bitter irony, polite irony(?), solidarity irony,...; approaches to verbal irony (pretense, echoic accounts, relevant inappropriateness, allusional pretense, bicoherence, contrast, ...); irony and constructions: are there entities usually connected to irony? are there constructions favored in irony production and/or in response to irony? irony and humor; irony and parody; irony and sarcasm: what is the distinctive line between them? verbal irony may combine with metaphor, metonymy, simile, hyperbole, understatement, rhetorical questions and many others, for a variety of practices such as political/extremist/racist, speech; irony and multimodality in advertising, political cartoons, comics, animation, newspapers, TV commercials, co-speech or stand-alone gesture, ... or in any social, cultural, political or ideological background; irony clustering in conversations and/or discourses; irony framing; irony priming.

Should you have any further inquiries do not hesitate to contact us.

(angath@enl.auth.gr)

(colston@ualberta.ca)

Abstract guidelines:

- Language of the conference: English (submissions on languages other than English are encouraged; e.g. French, Spanish or Catalan)
- Abstracts should not exceed 500 words (including examples, excluding references and figures)
- Include 5 keywords and clearly state research questions, approach, method, data, and (expected) results
- The abstract must be sent to clarecog@uv.es, together with a brief biodata (max. 50 words). Please [click here to download the template for the abstract](#).
- In the email body, please include the following information: (1) name of author/s, (2) affiliation, (3) title of the presentation, and (4) email address.
- The subject header of your email should include: FTL9 abstract submission – Name(s).

All abstracts will be peer-reviewed anonymously by members of the Scientific Committee.