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Research on (verbo–) pictorial metaphors is primarily focused on the genre of advertising, leaving other genres under-investigated. In this study, we focus on street art, which includes posters, wall paintings, graffiti, murals and other urban expressions systematically used by street collectives as communication tools for addressing socio–political issues in interaction with the spatiotemporal contextual surroundings (Avramidis & Tsilimpounidi 2017; Chaffee 1993).

We hereby present our systematic analysis of a corpus of 50 street artworks addressing the Greek financial and sociopolitical crisis, which outset in 2008-2009. The materials were gathered between 2015 and 2017, during an ethnographic research undertaken in Athens.

From the analyses presented, we derived a model for metaphor identification and interpretation in street art, which we hereby present. The model is based on the three dimensions of meaning identified in previous research on visual metaphor (Steen 2008; Bolognesi et al., in press), which we modified and applied to the genre of street art.

Our analyses show that, although our model can be applied reliably to street art, and enable the analysts to distinguish metaphors from other rhetorical figures within these pictures, this genre usually requires several sources of conceptual and linguistic knowledge to be integrated in the analysis of the pictures, in order to achieve a successful interpretation. These include contextual information, previous sociocultural and historical knowledge, shared conventionalities, and linguistic knowledge. In this talk, we exemplify our claims, as well as our model, through several examples taken from our corpus.

With this talk, we therefore offer further contribution to the questions of how street artworks can be interpreted in view of metaphoric conceptions and how these are related to the semiotic systems of language and picture taking into account their (verbo–) pictorial interaction.

References:

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