

Pragmatic phenomena in argumentation

It is not only about *what* you say, but also about *how* you say it

Workshop proposal for the SLE 2023 conference

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Workshop description

The way language is used in argumentative contexts has been an object of inquiry since the early beginnings of the discipline. In his theorizations, Aristotle (see 1995, 2004, 2007, 2015, 2019) illustrated how the use of language can shape persuasiveness, by providing a systematic account embedded in logic, dialectics and rhetoric. This interest in language-oriented approaches to argumentation resisted the changes of time and is also found in modern theories. For example, Anscombe and Ducrot (1983) have illustrated with their argumentation-within-language approach, that language is profoundly argumentative and that both concepts can't be dissociated from each other. One of the discussed aspects is the role of words and expressions such as argumentative connectives (e.g., *mais* closest to English *but*) which are used to create a coherence link between two segments of discourse and argumentative operators (e.g., *presque* closest to English *almost*) which are used to indicate the argumentative potential. Other modern theorizations like the pragma-dialectical approach to argumentation (see e.g., van Eemeren & Grootendorst, 1992, 2004) combines insights from two disciplines, namely pragmatics and dialectics, in a model of critical discussion that details how an ideal argumentative exchange should go about. Not only does their theory provide a prescriptive approach to discussing the norms for reasonable argumentation, but it also shows a remarkable interest in linguistic aspects such as the role of argumentative indicators, i.e., discourse markers

that are indicative of specific argumentative moves within the 4 stages of a critical discussion.

But why is it important to include a pragmatic dimension when it comes to studying argumentation? The easiest answer can be found in the fact that the effectiveness of a message does not only depend on the content that is conveyed, but also on the structure through which it is conveyed. When people are arguing they make use of a number of pragmatic phenomena such as implicatures (e.g., Macagno & Walton, 2013), presuppositions (e.g., Lombardi Vallauri et al., 2021), rhetorical questions (e.g., Snoeck Henkemans, 2007), irony (e.g., Garmendia, 2018), and framing (e.g., Musi & Aakhus, 2019), amongst others, which can be used in different functions (e.g., criticism, stance-taking, (self-)praise, etc.; see e.g., Garassino et al., 2022). Different angles can be used in the research of said phenomena to account for their role and effectiveness in argumentative settings. A recent trend in argumentation shows an increasing interest in experimental approaches, such as illustrated by Schumann (2022) and Schumann et al. (2019, 2021). Their research, for example, has shown that the effectiveness of a straw man fallacy can be influenced by a variety of linguistic aspects like the use of causal connectives or the information structure. Other approaches rely on different types of empirical research, such as corpus studies. Visser et al. (2020), for instance, have assessed pragmatic features (among others) of dialogical argumentation in the 2016 US elections on the basis of large corpora, contributing to current research in argument mining. Other approaches such as the one adopted by Oswald (2022) use relevance-theoretic tools to assess complex pragmatic phenomena like insinuation and its use in an argumentative situation, in order to show that insinuations are committing when contextually relevant. We also find approaches that focus on argumentation from a stylistic side. One example of this type of research is provided by Jansen and van Leeuwen (2021) who are interested in identifying characteristics of the argumentative style present in specific types of argumentative discourse.

Naturally, the selection of approaches presented above only offers a very limited view of a vast area of investigation combining two fields, namely pragmatics and argumentation. This workshop brings together a variety of approaches with a shared interest in pragmatic phenomena such as those mentioned above, which frequently occur in argumentative settings. All of these approaches seek to provide answers to the same question, namely how the pragmatic features and functions

underlying arguments shape the way they are used and perceived. To provide answers in this regard, researchers rely on different methodologies and theoretical bases. The aim of this workshop is twofold: first, it seeks to show that there are numerous ways of analyzing complex pragmatic phenomena in argumentative situations, and second, that there are different fruitful methodologies to answer similar, if not the same questions. Most importantly, this workshop seeks to shed light on potential areas of convergence between approaches, building bridges between several areas of specialization in pragmatics and argumentation. Overall, the workshop aims to bring together approaches to pragmatic phenomena and the field of argumentation, taking research in the latter field further.

Call for papers

This is a call for papers for a workshop during the 56th annual meeting of the *Societas Linguistica Europea* in Athens (August 29 to September 1, 2023). We encourage empirical and theoretical contributions combining pragmatic and argumentative perspectives from senior and early-career scholars, as well as PhD students. The submissions should focus on aspects in relation to the following questions (among others):

- What role do implicit strategies (insinuations, presuppositions, implicatures, etc.) play in argumentation?
- How does empirical research contribute to a better understanding of the perlocutionary effects of argumentative strategies?
- How can stylistic choices in an argumentative context be accounted for and what role do they play in terms of effectiveness?
- How is speaker ethos affected by pragmatic choices in an argumentative context?
- What effect do pragmatic choices have on interactional situations?
- What role do pragmatic phenomena play in conflict resolution?

For questions and further information please contact the workshop convenors:
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