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Resistance to metaphor

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18.

Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?
Thou art more lovely and more temperate:
Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,
And summer's lease hath all too short a date;
Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,
And often is his gold complexion dimmed;
And every fair from fair sometime declines,
By chance or nature's changing course untrimmed:
But thy eternal summer shall not fade,
Nor lose possession of that fair thou ow'st,
Nor shall death brag thou wand'rest in his shade,
When in eternal lines to time thou grow'st.
　　　　So long as men can breathe or eyes can see,
　　　　So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.

https://vimeo.com/48435193

Director Al-Saleem of an American cancer center wrote in the *Oncology Times* (March 25, 2007): 'Let's find another metaphor for "the war on cancer"'—his personal experience with real war in Iraq created too stark a contrast with his healing activities as a medical doctor in the US to be able to frame them as war.

After the 2015 elections in the Netherlands, Prime Minister Rutte urged other parties not to abandon the upcoming negotiations 'as soon as they found one hair in their soup', metaphorically debunking the legitimacy of any opposition.

Opponent Buma resisted this metaphor by wittily exploiting the unused potential of its implicit restaurant scenario: 'If there's one hair in my soup, I'll send it back.'

Problem

Not every metaphor used for conceptualization, framing and manipulation is presented in just one, easily recognizable way; moreover, *not every language user is as aware as Dr Al-Saleem or as skillful as Mr Buma in seeing through undesirable aspects of metaphor use and resisting a metaphor when they may need to.*

Problem

The difficulties for people to see through the more relevant cases of metaphorical conceptualization, framing and manipulation are considerable: they require specific linguistic, conceptual and communicative sensitivity and skills, special analytical and argumentative effort, and particular discourse conditions.

Goal

Break new grounds and create an innovative theoretical framework for resistance to metaphor that is developed in empirical research on resistance to metaphor in corpus work and experiments.
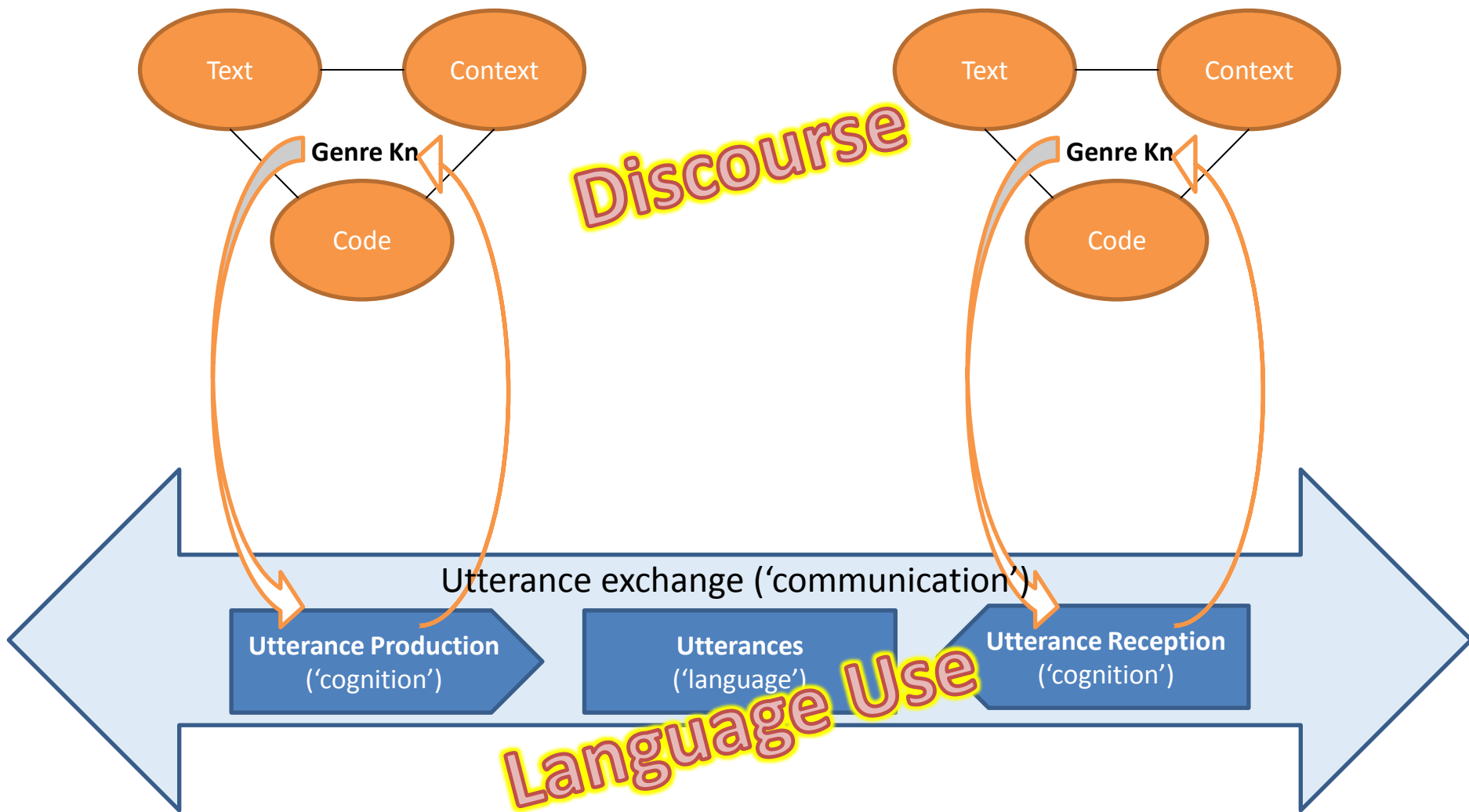
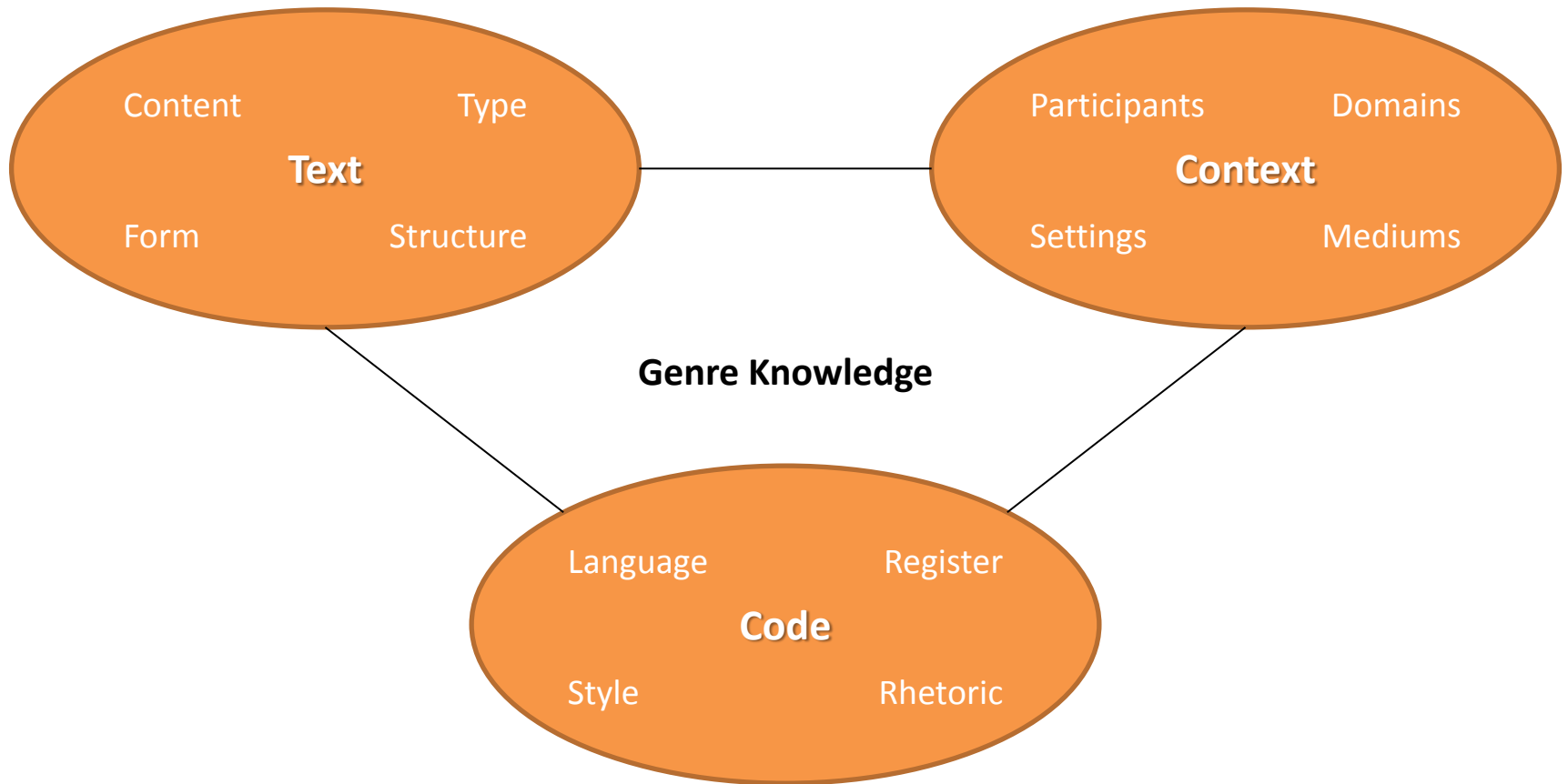*Ask when and how people resist metaphor, and why.*

Approach

Our **approach** will be to *elaborate an innovative, encompassing analytical framework in theoretical and empirical terms*. Our strategy will be to combine the three-dimensional model of metaphor in language use (including metaphor in language, thought, and communication—see Steen 2011a, 2013, 2015) with the pragma-dialectical theory of argumentation in discourse (combining reasonableness with effectiveness—Van Eemeren 2010).

Language use and discourse

This will enable us to reconstruct resistance to metaphor as a form of counter-argumentation that can be studied in two ways: (1) regarding the linguistic, conceptual and communicative properties of the contested metaphor as well as the resistance against it; (2) regarding the argumentative properties of the contested metaphor as well as the resistance it elicits.

Deliverables

1. an encompassing analytical model,

2. three observational studies in distinct discourse practices (public discourse, science, and politics and government), and

3. experimental findings of people's abilities to resist metaphor

4. a synthesis transcending the limitations of the individual studies.

Discourse factor	PhD1	PhD2	PhD3
Discourse domain	Public discourse	Popular science	Politics
Possibly dominant standpoint	Evaluative	Descriptive	Prescriptive
Possibly dominant contested metaphor	Labor relations as family relations	Brain as machine, network	Society as market, machine
Dominant participants	Managers, journalists, public	Scientists, journalists, public	Politicians
Dominant medium	Print, general, web	Print, specialized and general, web, TED talks	Live debate

Figure 1. Three different discourse practices for PhD projects

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RQ1

When and how are metaphors presented as (part of) an argument (and when not)?

Since most metaphors are seen as a natural means of conceptualization, not argumentation, this question throws a very novel light on metaphor in discourse.

RQ2

How can the analyst reconstruct metaphors as potential arguments by comparison?

Since most metaphors are supposed to have conventionally accepted entailments, but all metaphors as cross-domain comparisons eventually break down, reconstructing them as potential arguments by comparison opens them up to argumentation-analytical evaluation in an innovative way.

RQ3

How do metaphor presentation in language use (see RQ1) and argumentative properties in discourse (see RQ2) relate to the incidence of resistance to metaphor?

Since metaphor looks self-evident and resistance to metaphor has not been on the research agenda, answering this question is a cornerstone finding for the new framework.

RQ4

When can resistance to metaphor be characterized as a form of deliberate metaphor use?

Since the three-dimensional model of metaphor is still developing, it is a ground-breaking advance to describe how deliberate metaphor (and its distinct linguistic, conceptual and communicative properties) may work to resist a contested metaphor.

RQ5

What does resistance to metaphor look like in terms of argumentation analysis and the theory of strategic maneuvering?

Since the evaluation of argumentation, including argumentation by non-literal comparison, is a typically academic undertaking, it is a novelty in argumentation analysis to examine how language users themselves evaluate argumentation by metaphor.

RQ6

When is resistance to metaphor effective (and when is it not)?

Since various strategies may be used in relation to various metaphors, examining the responses to resistance to metaphor offers a unique insight into, on the one hand, the power metaphor might have over people and, on the other hand, the power people can exert over the allegedly covert influence of metaphor over their thinking and actions.

Application

- See work by Elena Semino et al. on different metaphor for cancer in information leaflets: from fight/war to journey

- Way people talk about tsunami of islamization, Brexit, etc in various genres and domains

- Text designers (for govt, edu, etc), communication advisers (in organizations etc)

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