

# Annual report 2016 of ACLC research group: *Metaphor Lab Amsterdam*

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*Coordinator:* Prof. dr. G.J. (Gerard) Steen

*Web page:* [metaphorlab](http://metaphorlab)

*Current external funding:*

- Gerard Steen NWO Free Competition, *Resistance to metaphor* (€ 744,108)
- Fu Jie Chinese Science Council, scholarship for doctoral research, *Metaphor in aphasia* (€ 57,600).

*Participants in 2016:*

*ACLC staff:* Gerard [Steen](#) (coordinator), Jean [Wagemans](#), Corina [Andone](#), José [Plug](#), Romy [van den Heerik](#)

*ACLC PhD candidate:* Gudrun [Reijnierse](#), Dunja [Wackers](#), Kiki [Renardel de Lavalette](#), Andreas [Finsen](#), Jie [Fu](#), Romy [van den Heerik](#)

*ACLC Postdocs:* Lotte [van Poppel](#), Roosmaryn [Pilgram](#)

*External members:* Amber [Boeynaems](#), Marianna [Bolognesi](#), Britta [Brugman](#), Christian [Burgers](#), Tina [Krennmayr](#)

*Description of the research group:*

The program comprises fundamental and applied research that deals with the exploitation of metaphor as a tool of expression, cognition and communication. The program critically engages with present-day claims in the humanities and the cognitive and social sciences about the alleged powers of metaphor in unconscious cognition (for instance in ‘framing’, storytelling and argumentation, and information, persuasion and instruction). This also means that the program seeks possibilities for rehabilitating more traditional approaches to metaphor, as in rhetoric, while indicating its potential for application to and intervention in everyday reality.

The research focuses on how metaphorical expression, cognition and communication work in discourse processing, with special attention to the difference between deliberate and non-deliberate metaphor use and its actual and potential role in a wide range of situations. We have also created two unique resources: the VU Amsterdam Metaphor Corpus VUAMC, an excerpt from the BNC Baby annotated for metaphor, and the VisMetBaby, a newly built collection of multimodal metaphors annotated for a range of properties.

Our objective is to contribute new insights into the role of metaphor and its use in all sorts of real world contexts, ranging from the first second of utterance comprehension to the extended temporal planes of public debates in the media as well as language acquisition and learning. We also aim to carry out applied research turning these insights into tools for

intervening in communicative practices of all sorts in order to examine and ideally improve their effectiveness.

*Research highlights in 2016:*

- Marianna Bolognesi and colleagues, using converging evidence, showed how visual metaphors make use of different aspects of conceptual structures than verbal metaphors in building cross-domain mappings between source and target domain, highlighting how modality of metaphorical expression influences the content of metaphorical thought.
- Christian Burgers and colleagues showed how metaphor, irony and hyperbole can be theoretically modeled and researched as figurative frames in structures and processes of discourse.
- Christian Burgers and colleagues developed and tested a reliable procedure for hyperbole identification in natural discourse, which is compatible with previous procedures for metaphor identification and irony identification.
- Romy van den Heerik and colleagues described how a Dutch government anti-smoking campaign was turned into a process of co-creation with the public by means of eliciting anti-smoking slogans at music festivals and social media that largely turned out to depend on creative deliberate metaphor use.
- Gerard Steen demonstrated how mixed metaphor can be theoretically modeled and analytically described as a depending on the deliberate or non-deliberate use of the metaphors that are mixed.
- Gerard Steen used the VU Amsterdam Metaphor Corpus to describe how the distribution and function of figurative use of sensory motor concepts in discourse varies across register (news, academic texts, fiction, and conversation) and word class (nouns, verbs, prepositions, and so on).
- Jean Wagemans showed how metaphor can be theoretically modeled in various ways as a part of argumentation.

*Societal relevance:*

In 2016, Metaphor Lab Amsterdam organized a Metaphor Festival, which included a Saturday of workshops. During these workshops, which were also available to people outside academia, different people showed how metaphors can be applied in different fields (therapy/campaigns/debates/etc.).