

The Rhetorical Potential of Metaphor

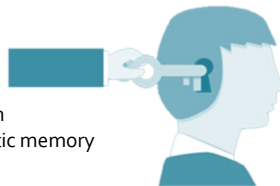
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Rhetorical Potential

1. Metaphor's rhetorical potential

Because metaphors may:

- catch the receiver's attention
- provide relief or pleasure
- enhance the sender's *ethos*
- reduce counter-arguing
- increase cognitive elaboration
- induce associations in semantic memory
- improve comprehension



they are said to possess rhetorical potential

(See Charteris-Black, 2011; Oswald & Rihs, 2014; Van Stee et al., 2018; Thibodeau, Hendricks & Boroditsky, 2017).



Yet, not all metaphors are equally persuasive. Why not?

2. Soundness of the argumentation

According to O'Keefe (2005, p. 220):

"normatively-good argumentative practices commonly engender persuasive success".

So, could metaphor's rhetorical potential depend on the soundness of the argumentation?

3. Research question

To what extent does the presence of a metaphor affect the evaluation of sound and fallacious argumentation?

Organisation of the Study

2 (sound / fallacious) x 2 (with / without metaphor)
multiple-message, repeated-measures design

	Type of argumentation	With metaphor	Without metaphor	TOTAL
Sound	Pragmatic argumentation	2	2	
	Causal argumentation	2	2	12
	Symptomatic argumentation	2	2	
	Slippery slope	2	2	
Fallacious	Incorrect causal relation	2	2	12
	Hasty generalisation	2	2	
	Sound		6	
Extra controls	Ad hominem (direct)		3	12
	Ad hominem (tu quoque)		3	
TOTAL		12	24	36

Materials

1. Experiment

Independent variables:

- presence of (maximally) novel, direct metaphors
- soundness of the argumentation

Dependent variable:

- perceived reasonableness



2. Example of a sound item:

Two friends are discussing work.

- A People should always try to stay in their job, no matter whether they like it or not.
- B I disagree; tigers in small cages will get ill as well.

3. Example of a fallacious item:

A couple discusses the plants that they have just pruned.

- A These plants won't grow any faster.
- B I think they will; after getting a haircut, hair also always grows faster.

Outcomes

1. Results

	With metaphor	Without metaphor
Sound	3.58 (1.89)	5.59 (1.53)
Fallacious	2.96 (1.67)	4.46 (1.71)

Table 1 Significant differences on a 7-point Likert scale (with 1 denoting "very unreasonable" and 7 "very reasonable") between the evaluation of sound and fallacious argumentation ($F(1, 9374) = 1490.28; p < .001$), and the evaluation of argumentation with and without metaphor ($F(1, 9374) = 2440.48; p < .001$). Note that there is also a significant interaction between soundness and metaphor presence ($F(1, 9372) = 111.71; p < .001$).

2. Conclusions

- Novel, direct metaphor seem to negatively affect reasonableness evaluation.
- Fallacious arguments are less affected by metaphor presence than sound arguments.



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