



# Rhetoric and Communications E-Journal

A peer reviewed scientific journal, ISSN 1314-4464

University of Sofia „St. Kliment Ohridski”, 125,

Czarigradsko Chaussee blvd, Block 4, Floor 1, Office 124

sites: [rhetoric.bg](http://rhetoric.bg), [journal.rhetoric.bg](http://journal.rhetoric.bg) (in English),

email [journal.rhetoric.bg@gmail.com](mailto:journal.rhetoric.bg@gmail.com)

**Rhetoric and Communications E-Journal, issue 23, July 2016,** <http://rhetoric.bg/>,  
<http://journal.rhetoric.bg/>

**Електронно научно списание „Реторика и комуникации“, бр. 23, юли 2016 г.**  
<http://rhetoric.bg/>

Inés Olza, Óscar Loureda and Manuel Casado-Velarde (eds), *Language Use in the Public Sphere: Methodological Perspectives and Empirical Applications*. Bern: Peter Lang, 2014; 564 pp. € 100.00/US\$ 129.95 (pbk/ebook).

**Reviewed by:** Andrea C. Valente, *Department of Humanities, York University, Canada*

The volume *Language Use in the Public Sphere: Methodological Perspectives and Empirical Applications* comprises a dense collection of articles that deal with a variety of theoretical and methodological approaches in discourse studies. The publication derives from a research project developed at the Institute for Culture and Society (GRADUN) at the University of Navarra. The volume gathers contributions that offer alternative methodologies within and beyond the field of discourse studies through an interdisciplinary approach drawing on linguistics, philosophy, and rhetoric. A total of nineteen chapters are divided into two sections. The First Section contains nine chapters that review and discuss various well-established methodologies in discourse studies, such as argumentation theory, text linguistics, cognitive semantics, and pragmatics. The overall purpose is to lay the methodological foundations for the Second Section, which consists of ten chapters dealing with “empirical applications”, that is, analysis of discourse in different settings. The empirical applications include textual material from the media, in old and new formats, which covers controversial debates on the wearing of religious symbols in public spaces.

The volume, rich in theories and methodologies, is carefully summarized in the preface, which offers the reader an overview of the two sections and their corresponding chapters. Section One opens with a chapter that attempts to launch rhetoric as a key methodology to complement discourse studies on the grounds of its capacity to analyse multimodal texts, since non-verbal texts are often excluded from general discourse studies. Nevertheless, the reader may notice that empirical applications of non-verbal texts are barely explored throughout the volume. The following chapters in Section One draw upon eclectic methodologies such as hermeneutics, Aristotle’s rhetoric, metaphor, text linguistics, and theories of argumentation, which at first glance, offer little innovation to discourse studies; however, a more comprehensive reading of those chapters reveal that most contributions react to poststructuralist theories often used in current discourse analysis. This rebuttal becomes more evident in Chapters Two, Seven and Nine, in which the authors favour pragmatic-based approaches, such as speech acts, relevance

theory, argumentative and hermeneutic theories, over critical theories. Thus, the novelty may lie in reviewing and reframing theoretical and methodological practices in discourse studies alongside empirical examples in a single volume.

Overall, the chapters in Section One show balance and cohesion, except for Chapter Four which seems to be misplaced, since the article deals with an empirical application of conversational discourse markers in translated texts. Despite defending translation as a suitable methodological approach to translated conversational discourse markers, the article mostly relies on applications of contrastive analysis of extracts from literary texts in English, German and Spanish, which could fit better within Section Two.

In this respect, Section Two consists of ten chapters focusing on the empirical applications of discourse analysis regarding media texts that deal with controversial debates on the use of religious symbols in public spaces. The material is from countries such as Canada, Germany, Italy, Spain, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom where strong movements in favour of a secular state have attempted to replace cultural values founded in Christian heritages. The main purpose in this section is to analyse the architecture of the arguments that sustain the debates by using a variety of discourse approaches such as cognitive models, metaphors, metadiscourse, and the narrative point of view. The contributions also apply research methods grounded in quantitative and qualitative paradigms to assist with the interpretation of the texts. For example, in the article “The Crucifix and the Court in Strasbourg” the author combines statistical tools with speech acts and argument analysis to examine various journalistic texts published in the Italian press in response to a European court decision on banning the crucifix from public institutions in that country.

Moreover, some chapters in Section Two deal with alternative methodological approaches that are less linguistically driven and more philosophically oriented. For example, the Chapters “The Dialectic of Identity-Difference” and “Religious Symbols in Public Spaces: Ethical and Legal Argumentation” consider philosophical perspectives that draw upon the work of Derrida, Habermas and Levinas to complement discourse studies that are linguistically based.

The majority of the empirical applications focus on written texts, except for the Chapter “Public Discourse on the Internet” which examines visual text. In this Chapter, the author incorporates “visualization” as an aspect of media rhetoric to analyse images as they enhance argument and create “emotionality”. This sole empirical case in the volume supports the assumption that non-verbal content (i.e. image) is still overlooked in most discourse studies, although images are ubiquitous in today’s society.

The diverse bibliographical resources provided at the end of each chapter reflect contributors’ meticulous research grounded in a solid Anglo-Saxon scholarship that includes J. L. Austin, Kenneth Burke, Walter J. Ong, and Richard Rorty among others. Along with it, references of current scholars such as Jean-Claude Anscombe, Eugeniu Coseriu, Oswald Ducrot, and Peter Oesterreich may open up new perspectives to the English-speaking readership. Furthermore, the richness of other languages than English contributes to the diversity of the scholarship in this publication. This feature is conceivably one of the main elements that stand out in this volume.

Although the collection of articles assembled in this volume is extensive and rather balanced, gaps are inevitable in its coverage. The reader might observe that none of the authors have attempted to explore methodologies and empirical cases that would examine a possible intersection of gender and the language of journalism. For example, in contributions that analyse media debates on the banning of female religious garment in public spaces (e.g. Islamic veil and *burqa*), the authors favour cognitive approaches over sociolinguistic perspectives. For instance, the article “The Debate over the Islamic Veil in Quebec” employs the ‘idealized cognitive model’ (ICM) to examine its content, however it does not provide enough arguments and examples either to justify its choice or to offer convincing results. Another example is the Chapter “Vocabulary and Argumentation in the Spanish Press Discussion about Islamic Veil: Metaphorical Projections of Burqa” that uses the ICM to examine lexical choices (e.g. *burqa*) in the Spanish press. Even though the authors attempt to work within a critical discourse framework, their application of ICM overlooks contextual elements in those lexical choices, which is likely to influence the cognitive representations. Similarly, in the Chapters “The Debate about the Veil in the Spanish Press” and “Representation in the Spanish Press of the Political Debate about Wearing Full Islamic Veils in Public Spaces” the authors opt for a metadiscursive analysis to deal with macro-structural level (i.e. level of content and argumentative structure) and micro-structural level (i.e. level of linguistic formulation of the text) instead of a sociolinguistic approach that could shed light on gender and journalistic discourse.

In sum, “Language in Use in the Public Sphere” can be useful for doctoral candidates and junior scholars who aspire to expand their knowledge of discourse studies towards pragmatic-cognitive linguistics and language philosophy as methodologies with empirical applications to journalistic texts. Moreover, senior scholars may find it useful as a reference resource for a course syllabus for graduate programs.