

**10TH CONFERENCE OF THE  
ASSOCIATION FOR RESEARCHING  
AND APPLYING METAPHOR**

**METAPHOR IN  
COMMUNICATION  
SCIENCE AND  
EDUCATION**

**CAGLIARI SARDINIA  
JUNE 20-23 2014**

**RaAM**

**Book of abstracts**



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# EXPERIMENTAL APPROACHES TO METAPHORS

## THE EXPERIENTIAL ROOTS OF METAPHOR

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Cognitive Linguistics claims the experiential and Gestalt roots of language conceptualization and its metaphorical expressions (Kövecses 2000; Lakoff & Johnson 1980, 1999). However, little experimental work has been done to prove the assumption from a phenomenological viewpoint (Pinna, Albertazzi 2010). The present study - following previous ones that showed the existence of naturally biased associations in vision among the general population (Albertazzi et al., 2013; Dadam et al., 2012; Jurgen & Nikolić, 2012; Spector & Maurer, 2011) - extends the research to language, verifying the association between shapes and their semantic adjectival properties. In previous work, certain characteristics of shapes were found to be naturally associated with certain colours. In this study we tested the hypothesis of a non-random, consistent, association of some characteristics with certain affordances expressed by natural language categories, like adjectives. Using the Osgood semantic differential, we considered the appearances of biological shapes in terms of proportion, activity, warmth, brightness, weakness, softness, lightness, boringness, pleasantness, and maluma/takete. The results support the idea of a correspondence, not only between different dimensions of visual modality, as already proved, but also between perceptual and semantic processes, which are basic to understanding the process of metaphorical expressions.

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