Section:

Polarization, hate speech, populism: reactions and prevention

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Name and information about the research team coordinating the section:

Ret-Net: Languages and Rhetorical Cultures
The research group „Ret-Net: Languages and Rhetorical Cultures" brings together scholars interested in the following research areas:

- general rhetoric and intercultural rhetoric,
- language awareness, language ideologies and representations of persuasion,
- argumentation and critical thinking,
- linguistic and rhetorical mechanisms of manipulation, polarization, fake news in different languages,
- theory and practice of teaching rhetoric in Modern Languages curricula,
- theory and practice of teaching foreign languages through rhetoric,
- the rhetoric of translation,
- rhetoric and culture in the digital world.

Section language:

english

Call for papers:

The degradation of the culture of communication - the spread of populism, increasing polarization, the pervasiveness of hate speech - has become a pressing concern worldwide, undermining democratic institutions and social cohesion. As a social and political problem it hampers achieving solutions and consensus, additionally diminishing solidarity and empathy among individuals and groups. The degradation of communication (in the form of populism, polarization, hate speech) has already been analysed in a great number of studies on both general mechanisms that foster conflict and adversariality, as well as their specific linguacultural and rhetorical realizations.

Surprisingly, reactions to this degradation, i.e. reclaiming the standards of civil interaction, have received much less scholarly attention. Yet, resistance to the damaging divisive mechanisms of communication, as well as vigilance to the communicative risks inherent in controversial issues are critically important. Establishing a new common agora - also incorporating social platforms and AI - as a space for constructive persuasion and problem-solving is a significant challenge for citizens.

The purpose of this panel is to reflect on ways to restore communication culture severely damaged by phenomena of evil persuasion such as polarization, populism and hate speech. What conclusions can be drawn from analyzing the effectiveness of the mechanisms of divisive discourse to defuse them? What kind of meta-linguistic arguments for decent communication are likely to work in specific linguacultural contexts? What cultural ideals and values, appeals to shared knowledge, culturems and rhetorical traditions manifest themselves in the proposed remedies?

We invite researchers from disciplines such as linguistics, discourse analysis, rhetoric, media studies, communication studies and related fields to submit abstracts regarding reactions and remedies to the deterioration of the quality of communication on the individual and societal level:

- Meta-linguistic awareness: linguistic ideologies and metalinguistic concepts concerning the influence of language and rhetoric in sharpening and mitigating adversariality"
- The metadiscursive and metarhetorical level: analysis of arguments and ways of persuasion to preserve the high standards of communication
- Ambivalence of meta-linguistic policies designed as ways to counter conflict and division (political correctness, verbal hygiene, positive language, neutral language, bridging language, etc.)
- Reactions at the level of civil society: street protests; social campaigns; NGO's initiatives (local and international, e.g., long-standing programs that create a platform for discussion with people with radically different views, such as "Poland Debates," trainings of dialogue; fact-checking initiatives),
- Reactions at the political level (policy initiatives, legislation, self-discipline of politicians regarding their own communication practices)
- Reactions at the educational level: new textbooks, podcasts, tutorials and other forms of educating recipients for the sake of shaping rhetorical awareness, addressing the ethics and effectiveness of communication; new or renewed methods of teaching communication culture (e.g., public speaking, teaching debate, deliberation, argumentation); methods of teaching critical thinking;

- Reactions at the level of media owners and media workers: choosing policies for publishing content, setting journalistic standards; social media content moderation practices.

We invite contributions on the above-listed issues, especially comparative studies showing rhetorical similarities and differences in various linguacultures.

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