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The final definitive version in Cognitive Linguistic Studies is available online at:

https://doi.org/10.1075/cogls.22011.den

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Translating figurative language

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ABSTRACT
This article brings together the extensive literature on figurative language and translation into a single framework to serve translators in a directly practical way in their practice/training. It encourages a view of figurativeness as the norm rather than the exception and figurative language as a flexible meaning-making resource rather than an obstacle to contend with. All language is characterized as figurative because of the indeterminacy of language and the partial nature of meaning making; all translation is viewed as non-literal because of the lack of exact correspondences between languages and the need to use near equivalents. Two approaches are recommended: 1) recreating the 'semantic space' of the source rather than mechanically matching its lexicogrammar; 2) viewing metonymy and metaphor as 'master tropes' and translating other tropes in terms of relatedness. The challenges of translating metonymy and metaphor in discourse at the level of the whole text are also explored.

KEYWORDS: translation, interpreting, figurative language, metaphor, metonymy, translation shift, indeterminacy, construal, semantic space, master tropes

1 INTRODUCTION

Figurative language and its translation is a topic scholars have repeatedly returned to over past decades and centuries. The body of scholarship in this area has grown exponentially in recent years and is now vast. The literature is found not just in one subject area but over a whole range of different disciplines: semiotics, stylistics, cognitive linguistics, translation studies, metaphor studies, conceptual metaphor theory, cognitive translation, pragmatics and discourse analysis. It seems therefore appropriate and timely to bring the various strands together in one place to show how they inter-relate.

This is what this article sets out to do. The knowledge presented here gives translators a 'big picture' awareness of the field which can be employed as a practical resource on which to draw in their daily work, enabling practising and trainee translators to acquire invaluable skills on both sides of the translation process: skills around decoding the source text, and re-encoding to create target texts. Each section deals with a separate topic; together, they provide an overview of translating figurative language which is joined up and interdisciplinary. The article is organized as follows:

Section 2 considers the differences between literal and figurative language, and argues that language items lie on a continuum of figurativeness, rather than literal and figurative being distinct and separate in the way often portrayed. It is further argued that, because of the role of construal, prototypes, pragmatic inferencing and the indeterminate nature of the linguistic sign, all language is essentially non-literal.

Section 3 traces the displacement of the traditional view of metaphor, as inessential and decorative, with the Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) view of metaphor playing an essential, embodied and unavoidable role in all communication in all spheres, patterning lexis in text in ways which are predictable and systematic.

Section 4 looks at metonymy and metaphor as over-arching modes of thought, instead of merely language items in text, and distinguishes between them on the basis of degree of relatedness between SOURCE and TOPIC. Metonymy and metaphor are promoted to the status of 'master tropes', following Jakobson. This offers translators a rule of thumb, based on degree of relatedness, for translating other non-literal language, such as irony, hyperbole, litotes and personification, rather than each trope requiring a separate strategy.

Section 5 reviews scholarship on translating figurative language from Translation Studies. In contrast to early work in this field, where figurative language was seen as a problem, this article views figurative language as a solution: a flexible resource alongside other linguistic resources with the potential of offering creative solutions to translation problems. Translating figurative language is framed in terms of translation shift, where the task of the translator is to occupy the same 'semantic space' in the target text, however that is achieved, rather than matching up idioms across languages in a purely mechanical way.

Section 6 explores cognitive approaches to translating figurative language. It is argued that all translation is figurative because exact equivalents between languages are seldom available, the process of translating consisting of the search for near equivalence between source-text and target-text fragments (translation shift). Translation, metaphor and metonymy can all be defined in terms of SOURCE and TARGET. The closeness of the relationship between SOURCE and TARGET in both translation and metonymy invites a comparison between the two and the modelling of translation in terms of metonymic processing.

Section 7 examines the organizing power of metaphor in discourse at the level of the whole text. Three types of pattern are discussed: metaphor clusters, metaphor chains and extended metaphor; and the different set of challenges each presents to the translator. Section 8 looks at three parallel discourse patterns for metonymy: metonymy clusters, metonymy chains and extended metonymy. Section 9 offers concluding remarks.

These topics may at first impression seem disparate and unconnected, but in the translator/interpreter's mind they must necessarily co-exist if effective translations are to be achieved. The purpose of the article is to show connections between different but related areas and develop in the practitioner a grounded awareness of figurativeness in translation in a broad sense.

The interdisciplinary nature of the article and its scope also explain the type of data employed. Much of the data consists of brief examples, employed strategically to illustrate points in the argument as it unfolds, rather than formal data-sets from specific experiments, which is currently more typical of research in the social sciences. These data are either of my own invention or taken from observations noted in my own field notebooks, while those drawn from published sources are attributed in the usual way. As the article is presenting an original theoretical framework in this area of applied linguistics, it would be premature to present more rigorously collected data before the framework has found acceptance.

I use the term 'translation' in this article to include both written and spoken translation.

2 ALL LANGUAGE IS FIGURATIVE

The concepts we have direct access to, those we experience as 'literal', are few in number; they are closely associated with our direct sensory experience of the physical world, such as notions of SURFACE, CONTACT, CONTAINMENT and PROFILE/BASE, known in cognitive linguistics as 'image schemas' (Lakoff 1987; Johnson 1987). All other concepts we do not have direct access to and involve a shift of meaning away from the literal to the figurative. In this sense, all language is figurative.

This is all the more the case when we recognize that languages *underdetermine*, that words do not encode messages fully in a water-tight or reversible way but direct the listener/reader to a general area of intended meaning (Langacker 2009). The semiotician Kress describes this in terms of the 'partial nature of meaning making' and sees it as a characteristic of all semiotic systems, "all signs are metaphors" (Kress 2010: 30) and "representation is always partial [...] in relation to the object or phenomenon represented" (Kress 2010: 71). Rabassa reaches a similar conclusion from his experience as a literary translator; it is his view that "a word is nothing but a metaphor for an object or, in some cases, for another word", that "a word in translation is at two removes from the object under description", and that translation itself "is a form of adaptation, making the new metaphor fit the original metaphor" (Rabassa 1989: 1-2).

Indeterminacy, far from being a flaw of design or a weak link, is both inevitable and desirable. The 'loose fit' of words around reality makes natural languages fit for purpose, while the fuzziness of categories and an interpretative component in production and comprehension provide a buffer of uncertainty which makes social interactions tolerable. Inbuilt approximation makes translation/interpreting possible, for if languages were fully determinate, no correspondence between categories across languages would exist, and no TL (target language) equivalents would be available to the translator. The 'principle of indeterminacy' for Quine (1960) is more visible and more necessary in translation than in communication within a language (p. 79) and 'systematic indeterminacy' is integral to the "enterprise of translation" (p. ix). Pym looks across translation theories and notes that those which emphasize the indeterminate nature of language imply that equivalence is possible, and that highly-deterministic theories, which offer no room for manoeuvre or 'wriggle room', "make equivalence virtually impossible, and perhaps translation as well" (Pym 2010: 96–97).

The concepts of 'indeterminacy' and 'shift' go hand in hand with *construal*, a notion central to cognitive linguistics which recognizes that the same entity can be constructed mentally in different ways and that naming is a motivated choice rather than an inevitable certainty (Langacker 1986). Because meaning making is partial, there will potentially be a number of different ways to express the same concept. Construal operates at the level of the word and at the level of the clause/sentence: at word level, *pullover*, *jumper* and *sweater* refer to the same garment, approached from different viewpoints; at sentence level, a multi-language sign on a Swiss train advising you to hold on tight, has a word for JOURNEY in German, *der Fahrt*, French, *la course*, and Italian, *la corsa*, but *while the train is moving* in the English version. Each version selects particular aspects of the same scenario while ignoring others; these choices also reflect the particular lexicogrammar of each language, the appropriateness in the context and a sense of what sounds natural.

Languages show lack of fixity in other ways. We understand words and how they are conceptualized relative to typical exemplars or *prototypes*, a category being understood by reference to a bundle of related concepts rather than defining characteristics which must pertain. This applies particularly to more general categories,

such as *bird*, *fruit*, *vegetable*, *weapon*. Rosch shows that we associate a word category with a constellation of different exemplars, ranging from those which are central or prototypical to those which are peripheral or atypical, and that these vary across cultures; whether you consider *parrot*, *blackbird*, *robin* or *ostrich* to be typical or peripheral depending on the cultures and experiences you as an individual are exposed to in your lifetime (Rosch 1975). Pragmatics introduces a further level of indeterminacy beyond the code itself, the gap between utterance meaning and speaker meaning being breached by inferencing and the use of additional information from the physical, interpersonal and social contexts in which the utterance takes place.

The idea of approximation is a commonplace for a practicing translator, who would not find alien a characterization of their work as the constant search for approximate solutions (code-switched synonyms), rather than exact equivalents, to accommodate inbuilt differences between the SOURCE and TARGET language. Lexis and morphosyntax between, even closely related, languages rarely correspond exactly. The implications this has for translation has been theorized extensively by various scholars, discussed in translation studies under the rubric 'shift theory'. Approximation is all the more apparent when we turn to figurative language as, by its nature, it involves a shift in meaning away from the literal. In metaphor the shift is so great that SOURCE and TARGET are unrelated, as in the expression *Life is a bowl of cherries*; while in metonymy the shift is smaller and SOURCE and TARGET are closely related, as is the case with *jab* to mean VACCINATION, where the jabbing action of the needle is part of the vaccination scenario.

A model of communication which sees language as a code, with thoughts encoded without loss of meaning or the introduction of ambiguity, is an attractive model, but one which is misleading. The reality is that 'meaning' is not to be found in text, for there you find just the physicality of language, the signifiers; nor is it out there in the real world we inhabit or imagined versions of it, unless we choose to impose meaning on what we encounter. Instead, the location of meaning is the mind, and language provides a sophisticated system allowing us access to the thoughts of others, and them access to ours. "[M]eaning happens in our heads, and only in our heads. It never leaves. Words *have* no meaning, books and libraries *have* no ideas, only people do" (Muñoz Martín & Rojo López (2018: 61). Language is a system which relies on our ability to interpret utterances using the context in which they unfold and the vast collection of cognitive frames, knowledge and memories we store in our minds. This introduces further dimensions of uncertainty and indeterminacy.

An awareness of these principles--indeterminacy, the partial nature of meaning making, construal, shift and pragmatic inferencing--is helpful to the translator as it relieves them of the burden of searching for exact equivalents in the knowledge that exact equivalents do not exist. When it comes to translating figurative language, the translator can confidently abandon a polarized view of language as either literal or figurative and explore what goes on between the extreme ends of the continuum, and be empowered to use figurative language creatively as a flexible resource in reaching their communicative ends--as this article demonstrates.

3 FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE IS ESSENTIAL AND UNAVOIDABLE

The vast body of scholarship on metaphor which has grown up in recent years within cognitive linguistics, collectively referred to as Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT), has radically changed how we think about figurative language. Figurative language is

viewed as an unavoidable part of a language user's repertoire, deriving from a shared and embodied experience of the physical world. This contrasts with the traditional view of figurative language as decorative, detached and associated mainly with literary genres. CMT not only views figurative language as a legitimate choice in discourse in all walks of life and across all disciplines and languages but often as the only choice--without metaphor we would be lost for words.

This modern view characterizes metaphor (and metonymy, part of the CMT programme from the beginning) as first and foremost a thought phenomenon and only secondarily a language phenomenon. We engage with metaphor at a higher level of abstracted thought, schemes referred to as *conceptual metaphors*, identified in written formulae of the kind GOOD IS HIGH, in which the first element, GOOD, is the more abstract **TARGET** domain, and is the matter in hand or 'topic', while the second element, HIGH, is a more concrete physical **SOURCE** domain, what you talk about the topic in terms of. Conceptual metaphors are responsible for patterning the lexicon. The conceptual metaphor GOOD IS HIGH, for example, has engendered *pinnacle, zenith, high-flier, high powered, upper class, top job, top priority, come out on top, tower over, the sky's the limit, onwards and upwards* (Goatly 2007: 35-39). In Italian, GLAD IS UP is at the root of a whole host of expressions, such as *sentirsi su* (to be in high spirits), *sentirsi al settimo cielo* (to be in seventh heaven), *non toccare terra dalla gioia* (not touch the ground for joy), *toccare il cielo con un dito* (to touch the heavens with a finger) (Alonge 2006). As well as being behind conventional language, conceptual metaphors enable language users to produce novel metaphors and process novel metaphors produced by others. And, furthermore, conceptual metaphors are not just expressed in speech and writing, but also in other semiotic modes, such as gesture and image.

Lakoff & Johnson's (1980) foundational *Metaphors we live by* has been modified extensively over the years, with the result that CMT is no longer a single theory but a progression of different theories, often driven by the same authors, to which other theories of cognition, particularly Conceptual Blending Theory (CBT) (Fauconnier & Turner 1998), have contributed. The SOURCE domains of primary conceptual metaphors, being closely associated with physical phenomena, link "our sensory-motor experience to the domain of our subjective judgments" (Lakoff & Johnson 2003: 255), and frame less concrete phenomena, such as TIME, MORE and GOOD. These combine to form second-order complex metaphors, such as LOVE IS A JOURNEY and ARGUMENT IS WAR, which, like primary metaphors, are responsible for generating conventional and novel metaphoric language. Complex metaphors in turn form systems, such as the 'great chain' and 'event structure' metaphor systems (Kövecses 2002: 124-129), which Kövecses brings together into a multi-level hierarchical model which goes from primary metaphors, through complex metaphors and metaphor systems (Kövecses 2017) to the most specific level of mental spaces activated by individual metaphoric utterances (Kövecses 2020: 127).

Given the importance of metaphor in communication, an awareness of Conceptual Metaphor Theory will play a crucial role in supporting translators in their practice. Acknowledging the existence of metaphoric schemes of thought, the driving force behind word meaning and patterns of lexis in texts, as a universal principle across languages is an invaluable insight for a practitioner. The systematicity of figurative language across discourse is not immediately apparent; some manifestations of metaphor are buried in the archaeology of the language while others are found on the surface of text, but once pointed out they are plain to see. The translator has a valuable

key to understanding how texts are structured if they have an awareness of the role of metaphor in communication, and a head start when trying to replicate those structures in a target text.

4 METONYMY AND METAPHOR AS MASTER TROPES

Metonymy and metaphor both involve shifts in meaning; in metonymy it is a small shift, the intended meaning of the SOURCE word/expression (vehicle) belonging to the same or a related domain as the TARGET; while metaphor involves a large shift, the SOURCE and vehicle belonging to unrelated domains. For example, in an interview at the Olympic Village before the start of the 2021 Tokyo Paralympics, the badminton player Jack Shepard employs both: a small shift with "We've got judo here with us […] in a couple of days taekwondo arrive", where *judo* and *taekwondo* stand metonymically for *the judo/taekwondo* ***team***; and a large shift with "participation levels will go through the roof" to describe the importance of a win for the sport, where the metaphoric expression *go through the roof* frames participation in terms of the unrelated reality of an object smashing through the ceiling (*The World This Weekend*, BBC Radio 4, 22 August 2021).

Metonymy and metaphor are two types of figurative language included in the system of the hundreds of schemes and tropes of classical Greek rhetoric--originally devised by Corax and Tisias, so the legend goes, to train exiles returning to Sicily in the art of persuasion when making a case for the return of confiscated land in a court of law (Bender & Wellbery 1990: 7). The fact that the list of tropes is long may sound alarm bells for the translator as it suggests an almost inexhaustible list of special cases of language use, each requiring its own special strategy. This section demonstrates how this minefield may be avoided by adopting an approach initiated by Jakobson in his 1956 essay on aphasia, where metonymy and metaphor are promoted to the status of over-arching principles under which other tropes are nested (Jakobson 1956).

Jakobson singles out metonymy and metaphor as fundamental processes in communication rather than just language expressions; metonymy operates through close (syntagmatic) association, or 'contiguity', and metaphor through more distant (paradigmatic) associations, or 'similarity', and "both processes are continually operative" (Jakobson 1956: 90). For Jakobson "the terms designate two (and, in his view, the only two) general processes of semantic production; they are class terms that subsume the entire field of the traditionally defined figures, dividing it into two basic groups" (Bender & Wellbery 1990: 30).

In more recent times, cognitive linguists also recognize the importance of metonymy and metaphor as complementary, but contrasting, ways of thinking. This is reflected in various edited collections which set the two side by side, such as *Metaphor and metonymy at the crossroads* (Barcelona 2000), *Metaphor and metonymy in comparison and contrast* (Dirven & Pörings 2002), *Cognitive and discourse approaches to metaphor and metonymy* (Otal Campo et al. 2005) and *Metonymy and metaphor in grammar* (Panther et al. 2009). While these volumes indicate an agreement among cognitivists that metonymy and metaphor are fundamental thought processes with which we continually engage when manipulating language, we do not find in them figurative language contextualized in discourse or applied to communities of practice, such as translation.

To indicate metonymy and metaphor as over-arching principles, as opposed to individual linguistic expressions encountered in text, I will be using the term 'master

trope' in this section. The term is associated with Kenneth Burke, though his master tropes (following Giambattista Vico) are four in number: metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche and irony (Burke 1969). I limit myself here to the two superordinate headings Jakobson identifies, metonymy and metaphor, and subsume all other linguistic tropes under these according to the size of shift involved. Thus, metonymy, irony, hyperbole and litotes belong under the master trope metonymy, as they involve small shifts in meaning; and metaphor and personification under the master trope metaphor, as they represent large shifts. I consider irony, hyperbole, litotes and personification in more detail below.

Irony can be glossed crudely as an expression with the reverse intention to the one stated; hyperbole as exaggeration; litotes as understatement (often involving a double negative); and personification, applying human qualities to inanimate objects. Following the master-trope approach I propose, translating expressions in these categories provokes a basic question: whether the SL expression involves a small-scale or large-scale shift of meaning, and whether this can be replicated in the TL (excluding, for a moment, the myriad of other factors, such as the textual context, intended audience and the purpose of the translation, which a translator has to consider), just as we asked whether *judo* could be used to mean 'judo team' (metonymy) and *go through the roof* to mean "increase exponentially" (metaphor) in the Olympics examples above.

The translator has to ask, for an ironic expression, such as, *Oh brilliant, well done!*, when responding to someone who accidentally drops a plate, or *Great weather!*, to mean the weather is bad, whether expressing *Well done!* to mean the opposite of well done and *Great!* to mean the opposite of great are acceptable in the TL; and with litotes, whether a double negative in the TL will give the same sense of understatement for expressions such as *no small achievement*, *not an inconsiderable cost*, *designing electric cars is not without its problems*. The translator has to ask with hyperbole, such as *they had millions of replies*, whether the use of an inflated number for rhetorical effect rather than as a precise metric is acceptable; and, with the larger shift involved in personification, *The ATM ate my card*, whether a word equivalent to *eat* can be applied to an ATM.

The master trope approach indicates similarities among tropes and suggests shared strategies for their translation. It introduces an economy of means for the translator by not requiring them to consider every new figurative expression as a special case, but instead to employ broad translating strategies based on degree of relatedness.

5 TRANSLATING FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE AND SEMANTIC SPACE

Only towards the end of the twentieth century did scholarly work on translation and interpreting come together as the mature multidiscipline we now know as Translation Studies--and, on its tail, Interpreting Studies. The publication of the *Routledge encyclopedia of translation studies* (Baker 1998) and Munday's textbook *Introducing translation studies* (Munday 2001) were landmarks in this process. Though both publications offer a panoptic overview of theoretical approaches and their application, neither devotes a section specifically to translating figurative language or makes any mention of it in the index. Elsewhere, accounts of translating figurative language tend to focus narrowly on translating idioms, conventionalized metaphoric words/expressions already established in the lexicon, rather than novel or creative uses, which are the ones which actually involve the ability to metaphorize. Hatim's remark on figurative language in the first edition of the Routledge encyclopaedia is exceptional and chimes

with the more flexible approach to metaphor recommended in the present article; he notes that a discourse perspective "has not only enabled translators to see metaphoric expression in a new light, but it has also encouraged translation theory to support a 'beyond-the-cosmetic' view of so-called embellishments" (Hatim 1998: 71).

The treatment of figurative language in translation coursebooks, similarly, is usually limited to idioms, characterized as troublesome, the cause of unwelcome interruptions in an otherwise smooth process, tripping up the translator and burdening them with time-consuming research. Several authors have offered practical schemes of strategies for translating idioms, such as Broeck (1981), Newmark (1988: 87-91) and Baker (1992: 71-78). A comprehensive overview of this work is given by Samaniego Fernández (2011: 262-266; 2013: 159-168). Newmark and Baker offer more or less the same four-stage, hierarchical checklist of strategies: 1) translate the source-text idiom with an idiom with the *same* image in the target language; 2) if that is not possible, translate with a *different* image; 3) if not, translate with a *literal* equivalent; and if all else fails 4) leave the expression out altogether.

Samaniego Fernández criticizes this approach for consisting of "prescriptive lists" and "ad hoc examples" (Samaniego Fernández 2011: 266), for failing to offer a full description of the variety of metaphor in translation, and for not being based on evidence from empirical data (Samaniego Fernández 2013: 167). For metonymy, Larson offers a three-way choice of strategies similar to those proposed for metaphor: 1) replace the source metonym with a target metonym more suited to the receptor culture, such as translating *tongue* with *lips* to mean SPEECH; 2) give a more explicit equivalent, such as *He gave the weather* (S)→*He gave the weather forecast* (T); or 3) give a non-figurative equivalent, *The kettle is boiling* (S)→*The water is boiling* (T) (Larson 1998: 124).

Nida (1964: 220), Toury (1995: 83) and Dickins (2005: 268) are among the few scholars who entertain the possibility of operating in reverse and translating a literal (non-metaphoric) SOURCE expression with a figurative expression in the TARGET text. For Toury, this option, 'metaphor for non-metaphor', makes metaphor "a solution rather than a problem" (Toury 1995: 83), and introduces a more flexible approach to translating figurative language. Brdar & Brdar-Szabó mirror this approach for metonymy, entertaining the possibility of "translating non-metonymic expressions with metonymic expressions", as well as metonymy with metonymy and metonymy with non-metonymy (Brdar & Brdar-Szabó 2013: 205).

Translation relies on approximations because of the underdeterminacy of language and inbuilt differences between linguacultures in terms of how they divide up the world (discussed in Section 2). As a result, translators operate in a mental world of approximation, synonymy and code-switching. A bilingual dictionary can be characterized as a 'code-switching synonym dictionary' where meaning in one code is accessed via a synonym in another code (Denroche 2019: 186). The necessity for approximation in translation has been theorized in many ways in translation studies. Catford, Leuven-Zwart, Popovič, Toury and Vinay & Darbelnet have all developed schemes of strategies which fit under the general heading of 'shift theory'--reviewed comprehensively in Halverson (2007: 106-111). The term 'translation shift' was coined by Catford (1965) but the scheme developed by Vinay & Darbelnet offers a more comprehensive and practical (and popular) scheme of different degrees of shift (though they do not use the term) based on the size of the unit of translation (Vinay & Darbelnet 1958/1995). Shuttleworth distinguishes between general approaches, or 'strategies', and

more specific operations, or ‘procedures’, in his analysis of data from popular science texts; he identifies eleven translation procedures, which include: accentuation, addition, explicitation, implication, modification, replacement, retention and scattering (Shuttleworth 2017: 189-190).

Looking for precise or near equivalents, and then moving on to more approximate equivalents if they are not available, is the bread and butter of translation work within the equivalence paradigm and a model all translators would recognize. Numerous terms have been used by scholars to theorize the phenomenon: Nida speaks of ‘addition’ and ‘subtraction’ (Nida 1964); Hervey & Higgins of ‘compensation by splitting’ and ‘compensation by merging’ (Hervey & Higgins 1992); Malone uses the terms ‘amplification’ and ‘reduction’ (Pym 2010:17); while Lederer pairs ‘dilations’ with ‘contractions’ (Lederer 1976). Vinay & Darbelnet in their list of ‘translation techniques’ offer a number of complementary pairs, all involving expansion and reduction of some kind: amplification/economy, dilution/concentration, explicitation/implicitation, generalization/particularization and supplementation/reduction (Vinay & Darbelnet 1958/1995). To this list can be added Klaudy who adopts ‘explicitation’ and ‘implicitation’ as broad categories “to cover everything that is ‘more’ […] or ‘less’” (Pym 2010: 15). Klaudy investigates how direction of translation affects symmetries between languages, explicitation making information implied in the source text overt in the target text (Klaudy 2001). Krings’s psycholinguistic model identifies the decision-making strategies to choose among ‘competing equivalents’ (Krings 1986).

These operations and strategies can all be seen in terms of a single purpose: to occupy the same ‘semantic space’ in the TARGET language as that suggested by the SOURCE text. I am using ‘semantic space’ here to indicate the semantic coverage of a concept visualized as a multi-dimensional mental space, in a way similar to e.g. Dijk’s (1977: 36) and Osgood et al.’s (1957: 25) use of the term. The translator can approach this in whatever way they wish using any resources available to them. Matching items in terms of their lexicogrammar only gets one so far; adding figurative language to the other resources makes more possibilities available. If one were to translate the Italian expression *fare bella figura* into English, for example, several options present themselves, such as *make a good impression*, *not lose face*, *come out on top*, *come out looking good*, or even *come up smelling of roses*. These expressions lie at different points on the literal-figurative continuum. The translator’s task is to recreate the semantic space of the source-text expressions with a TARGET language expression (other factors being equal) rather than match expressions in terms of their lexicogrammar or degree of metaphoricity.

The Swedish idiom *Att glida in på en räkmacka*, literally ‘to slide in on a shrimp sandwich’ but meaning ‘have a privileged head start’, is often cited, no doubt for its colourfulness, opacity and cultural specificity. Translating into English, one might look for a similar image, one involving SLIDING in some way, but not find one; one might come up with an equivalent such as *born with a silver spoon in your mouth*, though this is unlikely to work in most contexts; or one might offer a paraphrase (such as mine above) or a literal translation, such as *not encountering obstacles/problems/hurdles in getting where you want in life* or *not have to work hard*. The suitability of each depends on the context in which the expression is found, the function of the source text and the function of the target text, as determined by the

translation brief, and not so much on matching degree of metaphoricity or finding dictionary equivalents.

To illustrate this principle further I offer an example of intralingual translation, the editing of a notice for a music event. The text runs: *Please arrive between 9 and 9.30 am, not before, as we will be* ***preoccupied*** *setting up*. The editor of this text may feel uncomfortable with the word *preoccupied*, as it suggests that the people involved have personal worries rather than that they are busy. One might try *busy--we will be busy*--but reject it as it sounds unaccommodating, or other alternatives, such as *have your hands full*; or metaphoric expressions such as *to be up to our eyes (in work)*, *have a lot on your plate*, might come to mind. Some of these solutions are single words, others multiword phrases, some are metonymic, others metaphoric; together they explore adjacent meanings within the same semantic space. Semantic space is not determined only by the lexicogrammar of an expression but also by aspects of the context in which it is found, considerations of the type of translation being performed, and whether figurative language is used deliberately or not (Steen 2014). Text-level choices, such as whether the translation as a whole is domesticating or foreignizing, whether it is documentary or instrumental, and where it lies on the localization-globalization continuum, will all play a role.

It is my view that practitioners are best served by a broad, inclusive definition of figurative language and an approach to translating figurative language which goes beyond the mechanical matching up of expressions across languages or a rigid focus on the specific lexicogrammar of language formulations of the source text; and that it is not helpful 1) to see figurative language as a different kind of language from 'normal' language, or 2) to frame figurative language as problematic. Figurative language is a reliable, flexible, grounded and organic meaning-making resource, available to the translator alongside other resources in the linguistic toolbox, which has a potential for offering creative solutions rather than presenting problems. Translators should see the choices which figurative language presents as part of the repertoire of good translation solutions.

6 ALL TRANSLATION IS FIGURATIVE

Metaphor and translation have in common that both are defined in terms of **SOURCE** and **TARGET** and both involve a directional relation of meaningful information between the two; but differ in that metaphor is an *interaction* between a SOURCE domain and an unrelated TARGET domain, while translation involves the *transfer* of conceptually-related information from a SOURCE culture/language/text to a TARGET culture/language/text. Further differences between the two are that the SOURCE in metaphor is usually more physical than the TARGET and only certain elements (mappings) are activated, while others are ignored; while in translation SOURCE text (ST) and TARGET text (TT) tend to be matched in terms of abstractness, and all elements of the ST can potentially be re-encoded in the TT. Translation differs from metaphor in always involving code-switching, the message being transferred from one independent code, the 'source language' (SL), to another, the 'target language' (TL).

For cognitivists, metonymy is also defined in terms of the interaction between a SOURCE and a TARGET domain but, unlike metaphor, the two domains are closely related, the SOURCE typically being a subdomain of the TARGET, such as in the expression *the small screen* (source) to mean TELEVISION (target). Given that close-relatedness between SOURCE and TARGET is a feature of both metonymy and translation,

framing translation in terms of metonymic thinking seems an obvious association to make. Processing metonymy and the process of translation have in common that they both involve the manipulation and comparison of concepts and language fragments which are closely related (Denroche 2019).

Brdar & Brdar-Szabó observe that the relative ease with which metonymic expressions are translated compared to metaphor is explained by "the fact that by definition the conceptual distance between the source and the target is much smaller" (Brdar & Brdar-Szabó 2014: 243) and identify metonymy "as a translation tool or strategy" (Brdar & Brdar-Szabó 2013: 205). Ruiz de Mendoza Ibáñez & Diez Velasco's classification of metonymies into two types, source-in-target or target-in-source, the former involving 'domain expansion', the latter 'domain reduction' (Ruiz de Mendoza Ibáñez & Diez Velasco 2002), is reminiscent of the 'shifts' discussed in Section 5 and the broad strategies identified by translation scholars of 'expansion' and 'reduction', described by Pym as 'translation universals' (Pym 2010).

Cognitive linguistics has been instrumental in taking the field of translation into a new realm. The work of Halverson (2003), House (2013) and Rojo & Ibarretxe-Antuñano (2013) gives prominence to the cognitive processes involved in translation and, by doing so, turns the focus back to the translator and the translation process. Within this framework, translating figurative language is re-situated within the broader field of cognition, with a focus more on the mental resources we have at our disposal for accessing meaning via language than on concerns about matching the lexicogrammar of text elements between languages.

Contributions which look at metaphor from a cognitive perspective include: Schäffner (2004) on the systematicity of metaphor in translation across EU texts; Samaniego Fernández (2011) on the application of cognitive metaphor theory to translation; and Schäffner & Shuttleworth (2013) on techniques for investigating Metaphor in Translation (MiT) as a process. Samaniego Fernández maintains that a cognitive-linguistic approach to metaphor gives the translator a role "which is much more relevant, creative and intelligent […] than had traditionally been acknowledged" (Samaniego Fernández 2013: 172), permitting translators to "create intentionally their own novel metaphors and therefore textual material" (p. 192).

This points towards a more flexible approach to translating figurative language and a sense that literal and figurative language lie on the same continuum. The universality of translation shift and its constant involvement in the minute-by-minute operations of translation are a constant affirmation that language is not determinate. Another way of saying this is that translation itself is figurative; and that our acceptance of shift, and therefore figurativeness, makes translation possible.

7 TRANSLATING METAPHOR IN DISCOURSE

The focus of the previous sections has been the translation of individual figurative expressions, but this is only part of the picture: metonymy and metaphor also organize larger units of language, and even entire texts. Metonymic and metaphoric thinking structure discourse at the whole-text level and do so in several distinctive ways; a contemporary account of translating figurative language needs to include these. The ways metaphor patterns discourse have been described in various terms, e.g., Semino (2008). I find it useful to classify these patterns under three headings: *metaphor clusters*, *metaphor chains* and *extended metaphor* (Denroche 2018). Each pattern

displays distinctive features and each requires its own strategies for translation. I look at each of the three patterns for metaphor and their translation in turn below.

7.1 Metaphor clusters

Metaphor clusters are concentrations of conventional linguistic metaphors occurring at points in spoken/written discourse where intense interpersonal work is being done or unfamiliar ideas are being explained. The metaphors involved are conventional--not creative, novel or one-off--and originate from various *different* source domains. Semino defines a 'metaphor cluster' as "the occurrence of several different metaphorical expressions drawing from different source domains in close proximity to one another" (Semino 2008: 226). One effect of metaphor clusters is to create an interpersonal buffer, a haze of indeterminacy, which allows the speaker to distance themselves from the subject matter and permits them to tackle sensitive topics indirectly rather than head on.

This can be seen in the extract below from an interview which appeared in the listing magazine *Time Out*, in which the photographer James Gooding describes the difficult period he lived through after selling his story to the press about his romance with the singer Kylie Minogue.

> It was hell at times, living inside that bubble. There were times when it really got to me, it really did upset me. But now it's all water off a duck's back. For the past six months, I've just kind of kept my head down and kept away from it all, and got on with my work. (*Time Out London*, 20 August 2003)

The high density of conventional metaphors (idioms) in this extract, *it was hell*, *inside that bubble*, *it got to me*, *water off a duck's back*, *kept my head down* and *kept away from it all*, increases the indeterminacy of Gooding's language at this sensitive point in the interview and helps him both save face and avoid hurting the feelings of others. In addition to occupying a similar semantic space for each of the metaphoric expressions in the cluster, it will be the task of the translator to replicate the intentional indeterminacy generated by bursts of conventional metaphor of this sort. This text is discussed in more detail in Denroche (2015: 118-119).

7.2 Metaphor chains

Metaphor chains are also made up of conventional linguistic metaphors, but, in contrast to metaphor clusters, they derive from the *same* source domain and appear more evenly across the text. Semino defines a 'metaphor chain' as "several related metaphorical expressions throughout a text" (Semino 2008: 226). This kind of pattern comes about because the conceptual metaphors which set up metaphor chains are (usually) primary metaphors, such as GOOD IS UP, metaphors closely associated with image schemas and our universal experience of the physical world.

Primary conceptual metaphors are not only responsible for much conventionalized language in the lexicon; they are often the only language available. For this reason, this sort of language may go unnoticed and not even be recognized as metaphoric. This is illustrated in the extract below from an article which appeared in the *Metro* on the euro reaching parity with the pound sterling in the context of the 2008 financial crisis. A number of words in this passage derive from the primary conceptual metaphor GOOD IS UP/BAD IS DOWN: *slide*, *plunged*, *low*, *slide*, *higher*, *sinks* and *lows* (in bold).

> The pound's relentless **slide** towards parity with the euro picked up pace after it **plunged** to another record **low** against the single European currency. The latest **slide** saw sterling worth just 1.022 euros amid expectations for European interest rates to remain **higher** than in the UK […]. Sterling has lost 13% of its value against the euro this month alone as it **sinks** to yet more historic **lows** […] (*Metro*, 29 December 2008)

These metaphoric words (vehicles) link across the text to form a chain. The author has framed the article in terms of GOOD IS UP/ BAD IS DOWN but has probably done so unwittingly, as this is standard language for talking about this topic in this genre. Because primary metaphors have a simpler structure, in discourse they tend to have the function of 1) creating cohesion, or 2) giving evaluation. Also, being basic and closely tied to the physical world, they tend to show universality across cultures. This text is discussed in more detail in Denroche (2018: 4-5). When it comes to translation, the translator needs to be aware of the systematicity of metaphor use in the texts they work on and be able to judge whether conceptual metaphors are used in the same way in the TARGET linguaculture, in this case, e.g., whether GOOD/BAD is framed in terms of UP or a different source domain, such as FORWARD.

7.3 Extended metaphor

The third metaphor-in-discourse pattern, extended metaphor, involves the continuation of a single metaphoric idea over several adjacent clauses (Semino 2008: 227). This can be within a paragraph or a bigger chunk of text, or a metaphoric idea started in one section and picked up again later in the same text or a companion text. Extended metaphors are novel and creative, and as a result they are specific to the speech event in which they are found. Cameron refers to the novel metaphoric frames which emerge in a particular text, and which are specific to that text, as 'systematic metaphor' (Cameron 2008), and includes metaphor chains under this designation.

The example below illustrates this pattern. It is from a BBC news programme where the Deputy Chief Medical Officer for England, Professor Van-Tam, uses an extended metaphor around camping to make a case in the COVID crisis for booster vaccines for the over 50s.

> I don't know if many of you are used to kind of crawling into small tents on mountainsides, but if you do so and you know there's a storm blowing, going to come up in the night, it's better to put some extra guy-ropes on, there and then, than it is to wait until it's the middle of the night, it's howling with wind and rain, and you have then got to get out of your tent to make your tent secure, and by the time you crawl back in, you're soaking wet, so it is better to be pre-emptive and to be prepared and plan for the worst possibilities. (The World at One, *BBC Radio 4*, 14 September 2021)

Most of the language in this extract pertains to a SOURCE domain of CAMPING. The words and expressions *tent*, *mountainsides*, *storm blowing*, *guy-ropes*, *middle of the night*, *howling wind and rain* and *soaking wet* are not intended to be understood literally, but instead are used as a framing device in making a case for the importance of a booster vaccination programme. In the last clause, *so it is better to be pre-emptive and*

to be prepared and plan for the worst possibilities, Van Tam returns to the TARGET domain and the matter in hand, vaccination--though the sentence applies equally well to the camping scenario. The implications for translation of this type of pattern are quite different from those for the other two patterns, metaphor clusters and metaphor chains. The pursuit of camping and wintery weather, while being readily understood by UK inhabitants, may seem a bizarre choice of comparison in other linguacultures. As the analogy with camping extends over a long chunk of speech, nearly 100 words, the translator needs to make careful choices if the communicative effect of the text is to be replicated effectively in the TARGET text.

We have seen in this section that the challenges for translating metaphor in discourse are different from those for translating individual metaphoric expressions. Metaphor is ubiquitous but can at the same time be elusive; while colourful idioms are plain to see, discourse patterns involving metaphor are less apparent. A translator with an awareness of these patterns will have a clear advantage, as they will have a deeper understanding of how texts are constructed and a head start when it comes to reproducing them in translation. We have seen that different patterns of metaphor in discourse demand different translation strategies; that there is not just one strategy which will apply to all three patterns but three different approaches and choices within those approaches: for **metaphor clusters**, the task involves replicating the metaphoricity of the original cluster and the protective interpersonal buffer that this facilitates; for **metaphor chains**, if the organizing metaphor is shared with the TARGET linguaculture, which is likely as the language of chains is highly conventionalized, one can expect translation to be fairly straight-forward; while for translating **extended metaphor**, the translator will need to draw on more creative skills and judgements to choose a suitable metaphor which will work across the passage as a whole, or abandon the metaphor altogether.

8 TRANSLATING METONYMY IN DISCOURSE

Like metaphor, metonymy can organize language of different units of size. At discourse level, metonymic writing may not appear at first to involve metonymy, as the language involved will not usually contain words/expressions typically thought of as metonyms, such as *the crown*, *the White House*, etc. ‘Metonymy’ as a descriptor is appropriate however because metonymic thinking is involved. Lodge observes that writing may be metonymic at text level but not at surface level, for at surface level it is made up of language we would normally describe as literal (Lodge 1977: 98-99). Gibbs makes a similar distinction and adds that “we need to look beyond metonymy as a lexical phenomenon […] to discover the ways that patterns of metonymy in language reflect patterns of metonymic thought” (Gibbs 1999: 74). Biernacka notes that the identification procedure she developed for metonymy works at the level of individual words/phrases but is unsuited to picking up metonymic thinking on the macro-scale of discourse (Biernacka 2013: 209, 231).

Metonymy organizes discourse at the level of the whole text in ways which parallel metaphor: patterns of metonymy in discourse can be classified as *metonymy clusters*, *metonymy chains* and *extended metonymy* (Denroche 2018). I look at these three patterns in turn below and the challenges they pose for the translator. As with metaphor, the distinctive features of each pattern require their own strategies in translation.

8.1 Metonymy clusters

A metonymy cluster is a particular kind of list, one made up of carefully chosen examples used to characterize a category. This is different from a literal list, such as a catalogue of amenities offered by a gym or a hotel, or a list of things to pack for a journey, as these are intended to be exhaustive, as is a shopping list, inventory or checklist. A metonymic list (cluster) is different from a literal list in being incomplete and not intended to be processed literally. The purpose of a metonymy cluster is not just to identify an entity or category but to evoke that entity in a manner which is vivid or evocative. The example below is a cluster consisting of three specific but salient (prototypical) activities, standing for the wide variety of things you could do in a shopping mall:

> Nearby is the shopping mall, where you can buy a new evening dress, have a teppanyaki meal with a friend or attend the premiere of a Hollywood film.

If the extract were processed literally, it would paint a strange picture of the mall, one where only three activities were available; the intention instead is to communicate economically and forcefully the wide variety of activities actually on offer, and this is done using metonymy.

The choice of three items is a common way of signalling a cluster in English but although the 'rule of three' is often employed, a cluster may consist of more or fewer items. A cluster can consist of a single example, in the case, for example, of a politician relating an anecdote to reinforce a point they are arguing. The specificity of the items chosen also signals a cluster; in the extract above, the very specific *have a teppanyaki meal with a friend* alerts the reader to this being non-literal. When it comes to translation, metonymy clusters are unlikely to pose any great problems for the translator as long as metonymy clusters are a feature of the TARGET linguaculture. Translators will need to be alert to how clusters are set up and signalled in the source and target languages they work with, as this varies across languages and cultures.

8.2 Metonymy chains

A metonymy chain (in the sense I am using the term here--the term is used differently by other authors) consists of words closely-related in meaning, referring to the same entity, distributed across a text. The words in a metonymy chain can be synonyms or related in other ways, such as in superordinate/hyponym relations, e.g., *fruit-apple*. Establishing the existence of a metonymy chain in a text depends on the listener/reader interpreting it as such; it relies as much on the reader recognising that the words refer to the same entity as the words themselves being related semantically.

In a self-help book, Gwen describes Andrew's behaviour towards her and the isolation she feels as a result (see also Denroche 2018: 13). Instead of choosing a single word, like *isolated*, and repeating it, Gwen gives several different words for the same idea. Andrew would:

> *turn a deaf ear*, *be unavailable*, *pull back*, *wall her out*, *not interact*, *give her the deep freeze*

These items are synonyms, "unified by common metonymic targets" (Brdar-Szabó & Brdar 2011: 232). Each term accesses the idea of isolation by employing a different

SOURCE domain, HEARING, AVAILABILITY, MOVEMENT, CONSTRUCTING WALLS, INTERACTION and COLDNESS, with some SOURCE domains being more metaphoric than others. What we have here is the kind of lexical cohesion Halliday & Hasan (1976) refer to as 'reiteration' in their account of cohesion in English. The added value of framing reiteration in terms of metonymy is to emphasize that its function goes beyond reference: as the metonymy chain unfolds across the text, the reader is given additional information with each new lexical item which enriches the message. The challenge of translating metonymy chains is knowing the limits of tolerance of repetition in the TARGET language and being able to judge how to reproduce chains appropriately.

8.3 Extended metonymy

The third pattern of metonymy in discourse, extended metonymy, involves language items occurring in the same passage which derive from the same conceptual metonymy. Referring to three pupils at a school who have taken up musical instruments as *clarinet*, *flute* and *viola*, or to patients in a hospital ward as *appendectomy*, *hernia* and *by-pass*, are examples of extended metonymy. Gibbs gives an example of the conceptual metonymy POSSESSION FOR PERSON being used to identify prospective housemates, *steam iron*, *stereo* and *electric typewriter* indicating the useful possession each would bring with them (Gibbs 1994: 334).

This example of extended metonymy draws on the conceptual metonymy BUILDING FOR PERSON:

> It just needs the White House, No 10 and the Élysée Palace to get together so that a political solution can be found.

The presidents/prime ministers of the respective countries are referred to via their official residences, BUILDING FOR PERSON; a further layer of metonymy is also present, as the nation leaders give access to the governments of the countries, HEAD OF STATE FOR GOVERNMENT. This is more economical and more transparent than giving their names, even though their names are available.

The language of extended metonymy is typically novel, such as: *Ham sandwich wants his check,* said by a staff member in a restaurant to mean 'the person whose order was a ham sandwich'; or *The appendectomy is in theatre*, in a hospital to mean 'the person due to have an appendectomy'. The first derives from the conceptual metonymy FOOD ORDER FOR PERSON; the second from AILMENT FOR PERSON. *Ham sandwich* is a novel metonymy here because it does not always mean 'person who ordered a ham sandwich', and would not appear in a dictionary with that meaning; similarly, *appendectomy* is a novel metonymy, as it does not always mean 'a person who is about to have an appendectomy'. Such metonymies, called 'situational metonymies', e.g., by Gibbs (1994), allow the speaker to identify a person, an institution, etc. via a salient feature when a name or other designation is not available. They provide shortcuts to a longer way of expressing the same thing, metonymy working as "a form of shorthand that allows us to use our shared knowledge to communicate with fewer words than we would otherwise need" (Littlemore 2015: back cover).

When it comes to translating extended metonymy, the challenge will be to recognize whether the conceptual metonymy it derives from exists in the target linguaculture. As was the case with patterns of metaphor in discourse, each pattern set

up by metonymy at text level requires its own strategy and the translator who is sensitive to these differences will be better equipped to find good solutions.

As figurative thought is capable of organizing language of differently units of size, from single words to whole paragraphs, there will potentially be situations where metonymy and metaphor are both present and where one organizes a unit larger than the other. This leads to the possibility of metonymy and metaphor appearing in the same section of text, where one is found *within* the other, i.e., ‘metonymy within metaphor’ or ‘metaphor within metonymy’, a phenomenon which has been given the name ‘text metaphtonymy’ (Denroche 2018).

9 CONCLUDING REMARKS

Scholars writing on figurative language and translation are represented across a variety of disciplines. This article has attempted to bring the various strands relevant to translating figurative language together into a single narrative of practical use to practicing and trainee translators. The importance of figurative language leads to the conclusion that all language is figurative and all translation is figurative: language is figurative because of the partial nature of meaning making using signs; translation is figurative because of the absence of exact correspondences between language and the need when translating to seek out near equivalents instead. The translator is encouraged to see figurative language as a flexible meaning making resource to draw on, rather than an obstacle to contend with. The ‘semantic-space approach’ proposed in this article encourages a view of translating figurative language which involves occupying an equivalent mental space to the source, by whatever linguistic means, rather than matching figurative expressions in terms of the image used or their lexicogrammar; while the ‘master-trope approach’ identifies metonymy and metaphor as overarching principles based on relatedness which can be employed as strategies for translating other tropes. The systematicity of figurative language in the lexicon and the various ways in which figurative thought patterns discourse at the level of the whole text were also explored. It is suggested that an awareness of the various aspects of figurative language and its translation outlined in this article cannot fail to impact positively on the quality of a translator’s output.

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Publication history
Date received: 22 June 2022
Date accepted: 19 September 2022