

**CASES OF EXPLICATION OR LOSS OF METAPHOR IN
INTERPRETING PUBLIC SPEECHES AND CONFERENCE
ADDRESSES IN BULGARIAN AND ENGLISH**

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The paper examines the problem of metaphor interpreting in conference discourse from a cognitive point of view in a newly-developing subfield of translation studies – interpreting studies, taking into consideration the different constraints, skills and approaches demanded of interpreters and translators. Metaphoric expressions are excerpted from ten conference addresses in English and Bulgarian and the interpreting strategies, involving similar and different mapping conditions on the basis of the different cultures, are analyzed.

Key words: interpreting studies, cognitive metaphor

As translation studies came into its own, metaphor, as a complex feature of human communication, became the focal point of research. In the last forty years we have seen a major shift in its paradigm, resulting in relocalization of metaphor from the field of literature and rhetoric to the domain of language and thought. Indeed a large part of language is basically metaphoric. The majority of abstract vocabulary in the lexicon derives from conceptual metaphors or root analogies, arising either from our pre-conceptual experience as infants, or from image schemata due to bodily experience. As a result of the paradigm shift, translators must necessarily consider the conceptualization on which a metaphoric expression is based if their aim is to achieve any extent of equivalence, however relative it may be. Baker (1992: 12-13) identifies the following types of equivalence: denotative, connotative, pragmatic, text-normative, formal, functional, orthographic, phonological, and lexical. The first three are relevant when translation of metaphor is undertaken. Later, Katan's classification gives credit to the cognitive approach in translation theory, whereby cognitive equivalence is considered (Katan 1999). It can only exist if the patterns of thinking in the SL culture are taken into account and equivalent TL cultural models and patterns of thinking are considered when translating metaphors, which have cognitive functions and act as

cognitive constructs (Lakoff and Johnson: 1980). They see metaphor as a means to understand the target domain of experience in terms of another, source domain, which makes it a conceptual phenomenon. The role of SL and TL culture in the process of meaning construction cannot be overestimated. They view metaphor as ubiquitous to the extent that it is “pervasive in everyday life, not just in language but in thought and action” and our “ordinary conceptual system is fundamentally metaphorical in nature” (Lakoff & Johnson 1980: 3). Therefore, metaphoric competence, defined as the ability to identify underlying metaphoric structures in language and awareness of cultural variation between and within languages, is an essential competence in all who are involved in the language industry.

Whereas most aspects of translation have been studied in considerable detail, studies of interpreted discourse, because of the nature of interpretation as an oral performance, have been much less intense. However, in the last years technology has developed sufficiently to allow access to a large number of conferences, and not only to recordings of the speakers in the original language of their speech, but also to recordings of the interpreting into various languages. Consequently, it has become possible to study the cognitive process of interpreting and the informed choices the interpreter makes within fractions of a second. There are obviously a number of essential differences between the translation and interpreting. Bistra Aleksieva (2010) mentions the following: translation is characterized by repetitiveness of the tasks, interpretation is not; during translation the entire text is available all of the time, during interpretation only parts of the text are available at a time; during translation one’s focus is entirely on the particular phase of the translation, during interpreting many activities are carried out simultaneously; the time for the translation depends on the translator, the time for interpreting depends on the participants in the speech act; in translation the participants in the act of communication are situated at a distance from one another, whereas in interpreting they are in each other’s immediate vicinity; reviewing the first draft of a translation could be done by a translator or reviewer, in the case of interpreting, by the interpreter only. We may conclude that the main distinction between the two is the same as between product and process. Both interpretation and translation of metaphors are culturally conditioned. As far back as 1995, Dobrzynska discussed problems of meaning in translation of metaphor, where she expounds on metaphor as a “linguistic sign that is used outside the normal usage, as defined by the code”. It makes sense despite transcending semantic conventions, which situates it

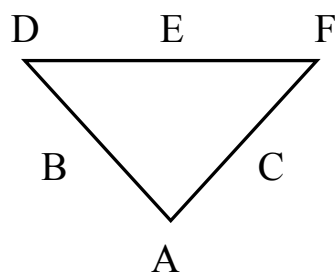
on the level of utterance, or parole. This refers to novel metaphors. There is also the so-called “lexicalized” metaphor which occurs from semantic shifts within the code. The meaning of metaphor is created through association of linguistic elements in the consciousness of the code users with their knowledge of the world. The listener should share the same associations as the speaker.

Conference-goers, both speakers and audience are usually top professionals in their respective fields, who share frontline ideas, knowledge of the world, and values. The topics are usually highly specialized, new terminology is constantly introduced. What they do not share, and what the interpreters are there for, is understanding each other’s language. And since language boundaries delineate the boundaries of the cultural communities, we may reasonably infer that they do not share a common cultural background, which, as stated above, is a necessary condition for understanding metaphor.

This paper is an attempt to study how interpreters handle metaphoric expressions and to classify their approaches according to the Cognitive Translation Hypothesis formulated by Mandelblit (1995: 492), in which he identifies two possibilities: similar mapping conditions and different mapping conditions, depending on the extent in which metaphoric images are preserved or transformed in the course of translation due to differences of conceptual systems of the source and target cultures, thus raising awareness among translators of the image schema underlying metaphors. These image schemas form our world view and they are at the basis of the body-mind-culture triad. Consequently, any translation of metaphor requires a verbal process of transfer between languages, a cognitive process of transfer between conceptual systems and cultural knowledge for transfer of meaning across cultures. This poses high demands on the interpreters, who have to be bilingual, biconceptual and bicultural. The difficulty of their tasks increases when there is a wider gap between the languages, conceptualization, culture, geography, religion, and historical background. Furthermore, language can be literal and metaphoric, and some languages are much more metaphoric than others. Metaphor expresses ideas in a much more concise way, more ideas are conveyed in fewer words, and judging from the experience of most translators working in the English-Bulgarian language pair who know very well that one page of English text usually produces 1.2 pages of text in Bulgarian, and vice versa – one page of original Bulgarian equals 0.8 pages in English, we may conclude that among the two languages, English is more metaphorical than Bulgarian. The reasons for this are various – the age of the language is not

the most important determinant. The development of the Bulgarian language has been retarded by the historical isolation of the country under the feudal dominance of the Turkish Empire, whereas English expands exponentially during and after the industrial revolution and the expansion of the British Empire, and we know very well that one of the most productive word formation models is metaphor.

It is universally accepted that important metaphors in all languages are body part metaphors. The human body is a common experience for people of different languages and cultures. Therefore researching body metaphors in different languages will bring to the front cultural issues that are realized in the different conceptual metaphors. Body parts in different cultures are obviously conceptualized differently, depending on cultural facts. Kövecses (2007) proposes the Triangle Model to describe the relationship between body, language, mind and culture:



A stands for the bodily basis, which consists of our basic knowledge about the structure and function of our body; Line BC represents the language – with the distance between B and C representing the difference between the two languages; Line DE represents the level of culture, with the distance between D and E representing the difference between the two cultures. This triangle shows that cultures and languages are all wired to the essence of humanness- the human BODY – more so with languages than with cultures; Line AF has a double function – it sets the boundary between the two languages and cultures, but it also represents the unity of the two languages and cultures arising from the common structure and function of the human body.

On the basis of these theoretical issues I have extracted metaphoric linguistic expressions from ten conference addresses and opening speeches in English and Bulgarian in order to identify the conceptual metaphors they are based on and compare their translations and identify the conceptual metaphors the translations are based on, commenting on cases of explication and loss of metaphor in the translations. Conference addresses are a special type of discourse characterized by an abundance of stock metaphors and clichés, vivid language, novel concepts, and metaphors of emotion. Each of the metaphors that were identified through the metaphor

identification procedure (Pragglejaz Group 2007) was put to the following test:

1. Is the literal meaning the same or different in the two languages;
2. Is the figurative meaning of that word form the same or different in the two languages;
3. Is the conceptual metaphor underlying the word with that particular literal and figurative meaning the same or different in the two languages?

On the basis of the linguistic metaphors found in the opening addresses and their translation by experienced interpreters working for SCIC at the European Commission, I came up with results, which I have grouped in four tables: metaphors and their translations with same mapping conditions, metaphors and their translation with different mapping conditions, use of loanwords and cases of explication or loss of metaphor.

Table 1: Metaphors and their translation with same mapping conditions.

| Same mapping conditions | | | | |
|--|---|----------------------------|--|---|
| Linguistic metaphor | Conceptual metaphor | Is the metaphor preserved? | Conceptual metaphor | Linguistic metaphor |
| Before I go any further Starting point Proceeding to the new situation | CONFERENCE IS A JOURNEY | Yes | CONFERENCE IS A JOURNEY | Преди да продължа Отправна точка Пътя към новата ситуация |
| Loosely knit group of states | CONNECTEDNESS IS BEING KNITTED TOGETHER | Yes | CONNECTEDNESS IS BEING WELDED TOGETHER | Слабо споена група държави |

Table 2: Metaphors and their translation with different mapping conditions

| Different Mapping Conditions | | | | |
|------------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------------|---|-------------------------|
| Linguistic metaphor | Conceptual metaphor | Is the metaphor preserved? | Conceptual metaphor | Linguistic metaphor |
| Dear Ladies and Gentlemen | PEOPLE ARE A VALUABLE COMMODITY | No | PEOPLE ARE ESTEEMED FOR MORAL QUALITIES | Уважаеми дами и господа |
| To kick off the conference | CONFERENCE IS A GAME | Yes | CONFERENCE IS AN ARTIFACT | Откривам конференцията |
| Rise up to the challenge | TAKING ACTION IS UP | Yes | | |

Table 3 Use of loanwords

| LOANWORDS | | |
|--------------------|--|------------------------|
| harmonize | MAKING COMPATIBLE IS MAKING PLEASANT MUSIC | Хармонизира |
| webstreaming | INTERCONNECTION IS A WEB INFORMATION IS LIQUID | Уебстриймिंग |
| Economic operators | BUSINESS IS A MACHINE | Икономически оператори |
| Discussion panels | CONFERENCE IS A PHYSICAL CONSTRUCTION | Дискусионни панели |

Table 4. Cases of metaphor loss and explication

| | |
|--|---|
| <p>The thread all through this event Setting the scene for this conference Strike a balance Welcome to this landmark conference I am delighted to welcome you</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Основните две теми които ще обсъждаме – Създава връзка – Постигам баланс – Добре дошли на тази важна конференция – Щастлив съм да ви приветствам |
|--|---|

Discussion

In his study, Mandelblit points out that there is a longer reaction time which signals a conceptual shift is taking place between the conceptual mapping systems of the source and target (Mandelblit 1995: 493). He finds that interpreters need time to decide on using different cognitive domains when looking for cognitive equivalence of metaphors, in this way they do the conceptual mapping for the TL audience. If similar mapping conditions exist – their task is easy and the metaphor continues to live in the TL. If mapping conditions in SL and TL are different, mostly due to short time for reaction, there is a resulting explication of meaning. There are various techniques exploited by interpreters when there is lack of equivalence on the lexical level. The most common strategy by far is use of a superordinate word, simile, or paraphrase. In a large number of cases loan words are transferred directly.

An interesting shift of conceptual metaphor is observed in the case of translation of the phrase “kick off the conference” as „откривам конференцията“, literally “to open the conference”. The English expression shows that the conceptual metaphor is A CONFERENCE IS A GAME. The mappings entail that the conference venue is a playing field, conferees are active participants, players, who pursue certain goals, it suggests that the event is fun, enjoyable to play, requiring exertion on the part of the players for which there will be rewards; there is a lot of action, team work, and desire to excel. The stock phrase in Bulgarian, on the other hand, is “откривам” which means “discover”, “reveal” “open up”. Conceptually in the Bulgarian culture the conceptualization is that a CONFERENCE IS AN ARTIFACT, with the following mappings: it is a static event, stripped of action, no excitement, participants are mere observers, not entitled to ask questions, they have no control over the events. The keynote speaker (as in the old totalitarian times) is an all-powerful god-like figure who raises the curtain to reveal a special artefact – a static object, to be observed in awe, with little possibility of interaction, no encouragement to ask questions, take the floor, an event directed by others, planned ahead and not susceptible to change. Thus the Bulgarian language still retains the scars from the totalitarian society which have not been wiped out in the thirty years that have passed since then.

In the case of interpreters at conferences, we may note that conference addresses contain a number of stock metaphors that are repeated in different variations over all events: These have become clichés that every conference interpreter has encountered many times – and links between the neurons activated at the same time have been established on

the basis of the principle that “neurons that fire together, wire together”. Experienced interpreters do not need to think at all, as a result of which interpreting is carried out in its most automated phase.

On the other hand, conference interpreters are not expected to convey everything verbatim, their job is to do spontaneous synthetic grasping and conveying of sense, and they can use more modalities to do it, tone, intonation, mood, emphasis. As St. Jerome recommends, “Non-verbum e verbo sed sensum exprimere de sensu”, or in English “Not word by word but sense by sense”, or else, to look at the deeper meaning of a text instead of just the words that comprise it. The meaning is expected to be represented in the manner in which an artist draws a picture of an object – it resembles a painting, showing the essential characteristics, whereas the translators are expected to give a photographic image of the original, their job is to do “analytical code-switching” (Pöchhacker 2004: 56).

Conclusion

I would like to conclude that from the study it is evident that every act of translation and interpreting involves cross-cultural transmission of cognition which requires a certain level of metaphoric competence that takes into account the culture of the source and target language. However, because the nature of the interpreter’s job is to transfer sense as quickly and clearly as possible, interpreted discourse differs considerably from translations. From the examples provided in the paper it is evident that interpreters have no problem preserving primary metaphors based on the root conceptual metaphor LIFE IS A JOURNEY, MORE IS UP because they are universal for all languages and cultures (Kövecses 2005: 30). The excerpted metaphors and the way they were interpreted also shows that there is no loss of metaphor when the same mapping conditions are preserved, as well as of clichés, and stock metaphors used frequently in conference discourse because interpreters have encountered them many times in their day to day work and have had time to decide on the best way to translate them. Loan words and metaphors are also preserved, indeed more frequently than normal. Obviously different mapping conditions present too great a challenge to interpreters and they either make great pauses before they make their choice, or they just explicate and digest the sense on behalf of the audience. Furthermore, the conference-goer community develops a culture of its own which gains precedence over their local culture, and the language of conference goers becomes universal, and with its large number of loan words, it tends to transcend language and cultural boundaries.

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