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# **REASONING, METAPHOR AND SCIENCE**

*Edited by*

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Maria Grazia Rossi

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In copertina: Gianni Pileri, *I ceppi solitari*

## Table of contents

FLAVIA MARCACCI AND MARIA GRAZIA ROSSI <i>Reasoning by Metaphors in Science, Philosophy and Practice</i> .....	7
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### Part 1: The Nature of Metaphors and Their Role in Human Rationality

STEFANIA GIOMBINI <i>Μεταφορά. The Figure of Speech before Aristotle</i> .....	25
FRANCESCA ERVAS AND ELISABETTA GOLA <i>From a Ghost to a Sketch: Translating Metaphors in Context</i> .....	41
BIPIN INDURKHYA <i>Thought Experiments, Models, and the Heuristic Power of Metaphors in Science</i> .....	61
FRANCESCA TRAMONTANO AND DAMIANO BONDI <i>The Poietic Power of Metaphors</i> .....	87
ANTONIO ALLEGRA <i>Science and Illusion. Metaphors and Visions of the Posthuman</i> .....	101

### Part 2: The Heuristic Use of the Metaphors in Science

FLAVIA MARCACCI AND VALENTINA ZAFFINO <i>The Infinite Cosmos, Similitudo or Data? Giordano Bruno and the Astronomers of XVI-XVII Century</i> .....	119
RAFFAELE PISANO AND PAOLO BUSSOTTI <i>The Fiction of the Infinitesimals in Newton's Works. On the Metaphoric use of Infinitesimals in Newton</i> .....	141
SABRINA MORETTI <i>The Use of Metaphors and Analogical Representations in Social Simulation Models</i> .....	161
MARCO GIUNTI <i>What is a Physical Realization of a Computational System?</i> .....	177
MIRKO DI BERNARDO <i>Metaphorical Models of The Living and The Theory of Biological Self-organization</i> .....	193





# From a Ghost to a Sketch: Translating Metaphors in Context

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## 1. Theorizing metaphors

Since the beginning of the history of linguistics and philosophical thought, metaphor has been considered a powerful device in communication. In Rhetoric, metaphor played a special role among other rhetorical figures. Quintilian (*Inst. Orat.*, VIII, 6 [4]), for example, described metaphor as a trope *frequentissimus* and *longe pulcherrimus* and stated that “[in] metaphor [...] a noun or verb is transferred from the place to which it properly belongs to another where there is no literal term or the transferred is better than the literal”. Aristotle (1987) was aware that metaphors represented a non-eliminable way to communicate and think. In *Poetics* (322 B.C.) he wrote: “The greatest thing by far is to be a master of metaphor. It is the one thing that cannot be learned from others; it is also a sign of genius, since a good metaphor implies an eye for resemblance”. Aristotle himself (1973) identified an important property of metaphors: their capacity to put scenes before our eyes.

It is also good to use metaphorical words; but the metaphors must not be far-fetched, or they will be difficult to grasp, nor obvious, or they will have no effect. The words, too, ought to set the scene before our eyes; for events ought to



be seen in progress rather than in prospect. So we must aim at these three points: Antithesis, Metaphor, and Actuality (*Rethorics*, III, 10, 1410 b).

In this regard, we can claim that from the very beginning, philosophers and rhetoricians grasped all the basic properties of metaphor in their theories. These same ingredients have been developed and shared by the multidisciplinary community of scholars who deal with non literal meanings and metaphors today: centrality of the process of metaphor use, reference to the senses, connection between learning effectiveness and a pleasant attitude and environment, role of intuition that points out the not so obvious relationships. All these issues call into question the mental mechanisms that are not merely circumscribed to the usage of language, but also extend to the logical-cognitive, sensory, and emotional processes involved in communication. These processes are related to communication, both comprehension and aesthetic ‘taste’.

Afterwards, while theoretical perspectives on metaphor did not discard some of the properties identified by Aristotle, but scholars emphasized certain singular properties, thus losing the overall picture. The cognitive power of metaphors and its relationship with the physical nature of the body is underlined in the work of Giambattista Vico. According to him, metaphor has primary importance in thought and is connected to the conception of *ingenium*, that is to say the capacity to catch ideal similarities, to unify different things and to create correlations. Vico wrote that, among all the tropes, metaphor is the “most necessary and frequent” (Vico 1744: tr. 116). Vico’s ‘embodied’ perspective nevertheless lost the scientific and learning role of metaphors. In the age of Enlightenment, indeed, scientific research is based on the Cartesian approach, in which a rationalist and geometric method left the non-deductive reasoning outside the realm of scientific knowledge.

In this process, obviously, the Aristotelian idea that metaphor was a proper conceptual instrument for knowledge acquisition was lost. During the period of Enlightenment the gap between formal methods (*langues des calcules*) and other forms of knowledge got strengthened. This gap has increased in our century by logical neo-positivism, in which the gap between scientific knowledge and linguistic natural reasoning is probably the highest. Newman (2002: 1), indeed, describes a direct bridge between Aristotle and contemporary theory of metaphor:

In Rhetoric, Aristotle identifies ‘bringing-before-the-eyes’ as a capacity that is crucial to metaphors because it allows rhetoricians to actualize actions immediately before audiences, leading those audiences to insight. Because this

description suggests that metaphors activate cognitive mechanisms on the part of their listeners, 'bringing-before-the-eyes' has been considered a key element within Aristotle's theory and the nexus of that approach to metaphor and contemporary conceptual ones.

Max Black in the Sixties took decisive steps back from neo-empiricist method and demonstrated that metaphor is a form of conceptual model capable of generating new knowledge and even generating scientific progress (Black 1954, 1960, 1977). Furthermore, Black, not only deepened the understanding of the operations implied by the logical-conceptual transposition of meaning, but also identified different types of metaphor accounts. There is the case in which we have a literal sentence L that we can express metaphorically (*substitution view of metaphor*):

On this view, the meaning of M, in its metaphorical occurrence, is just the literal meaning of L. The metaphorical use of an expression consists, on this view, of the use of that expression in other than its proper or normal sense, in some context that allows the improper or abnormal sense to be detected and appropriately transformed (Black 1954: 279).

A special case of the substitution view is the *comparison view*, which holds that the metaphorical statement might be replaced by an equivalent literal comparison.

If a writer holds that a metaphor consists in the presentation of the underlying analogy or similarity, he will be taking what I shall call a comparison view of metaphor. When Schopenhauer called a geometrical proof a mousetrap, he was, according to such a view, saying (though not explicitly): "A geometrical proof is like a mousetrap, since both offer a delusive reward, entice their victims by degrees, lead to disagreeable surprise, etc." This is a view of metaphor as a condensed or elliptical simile (Black 1954: 283).

Black introduces instead the *interaction view*, according to which a metaphorical statement has two distinct subjects (a principal one and a subsidiary one), which are systems of things. The system of associated implications of the subsidiary subject is applied to the principal one that extends its meaning. The result is a new set of meanings, in which there is a shift in the words of the sentence.

The metaphor selects, emphasizes, suppresses, and organizes features of the principal subject by implying statements about it that normally apply to the subsidiary subject. [...] This use of a 'subsidiary subject' to foster insight into a 'principal subject' is a distinctive intellectual operation (though one familiar enough through our experiences of learning anything whatever), demanding

simultaneous awareness of both subjects but not reducible to any comparison between the two (Black 1954: 291-193).

After Black's work, no one could say that metaphor is a marginal phenomenon and an obstacle to understanding the truth. The focus is now on the relationship between objectivity and the natural language component in theoretical construction.

In building common sense and scientific concepts, metaphors play a relevant role especially in the step of discovery and/or creation of 'new' representations of world aspects. One of the mechanisms involved in this process is the capacity to find similarities and create conceptual categories. Many scholars, among which Amos Tversky (1977), George Miller (1979), Andrew Ortony (1979a, 1979b), Earl Mac Cormac (1985) focus their research on the cognitive functions in place in the process of categorization and comprehension. Another approach regarding the ways through which metaphor intervenes in modelling our world representation is the conceptual metaphor theory, formulated by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (1980). Lakoff & Johnson's perspective has represented a conceptual revolution in the field of metaphor theories, mainly because they changed the focus of metaphor theories from language to thought:

In contemporary metaphors theories, there is a passage from an approach to metaphor as a mainly linguistic issue to an approach centered on its conceptual nature. This passage causes a transfer of the metaphorical locus from words to concepts that metaphors – directly or indirectly – express and structure (Cacciari 1991: 2).

In Lakoff and Johnson's theory (1980), through a metaphor we can extend our knowledge to grasp new concepts, mapping the conceptual structure from the source domain (usually concrete or at least better-known) to a target domain. The linguistic expressions are a display of this projection. Metaphors appear in language, but are rooted in conceptual schemas, which are metaphorical in nature.

[...] complex metaphors arise from primary metaphors that are directly grounded in the everyday experience that links our sensory-motor experience to the domain of our subjective judgments (Lakoff & Johnson 1980: 515).

The only literal relationship in this view is the grounding of image-schemata that are directly connected to 'literal' activities. Conceptual metaphors are indeed based on image schemata, i.e. recurring models of bodily experiences, which structure (in a non-propositional format) relevant

information coming from sensory-motor activities. Even if this view has forever changed the field of metaphor studies, and no one can ignore the relevance of metaphor in thought, reasoning, action, and – of course – communication (Golla & Ervas 2013, 2016; Ervas *et al.* 2017), nevertheless it has been criticized for its conceptual reductionism. It has been objected that metaphorical expressions would not be a surface reflection of a deeper conceptual structure that determines the metaphorical nature of the expression. Proofs in this direction come from cultural and translation studies that highlight that metaphors are not so universal as they would be if they were so strictly rooted in universal concepts (such as the PATH metaphor). Often, metaphoric expressions are strongly determined by the language and culture of the linguistic community to which speakers belong, rather than by the conceptual structure (Delaney 2004; Deignan 2005; Kövecses 2005).

More recent metaphor theories propose a unified theory of the aesthetic and cognitive aspects of metaphor, re-evaluating the role of imagination in the modulation of the literal meaning (Carston 2010; Indurkha 2016). Carston (2002), in particular, maintains that lexicalized metaphors can be understood through the lexical concept, created *ad hoc*, starting from literal meanings. This pragmatic process takes the encoded concept and generates an *ad hoc* concept in the proposition the speaker intends to communicate, i.e. a proposition corresponding to the intuitive truth-conditions. They assign the intuitive truth-conditions to the explicit proposition, respecting speakers' semantic intuitions: understanding a statement means knowing the *concrete* circumstances of its truth. In the case of live metaphors, images are instead activated and further developed by imagination when a change of perspective is required, either by focusing on a detail or by dynamically restructuring a sequence (Carston 2010). In this paper we aim to discuss the possibilities and limits of this theory in the case of metaphor translation, taking into account, in particular, the main translation strategies proposed in the relevant literature (Newmark 1988; Larson 1984; Tirkkonen-Condit 2001). We will analyze some examples to show how in the translation process we find a *continuum* of cases, that range from metaphors based on consolidated and intercultural conceptual systems to images strictly connected to the literal meaning of the source language.

## 2. Metaphor and polysemy in translation

The translation of metaphor has always been a source of discussion and considerable disagreement, due to its multifaceted nature and the high level of creativity involved. Translation scholars have formulated different hypotheses on metaphor translatability that can be classified into three main groups: 1) metaphors are untranslatable, 2) metaphors are fully translatable, and 3) metaphors are partially translatable and thus are not completely equivalent to the target language. The advocates of the first hypothesis (Nida 1964; Vinay & Darbelnet 1995; Dagut 1976, 1987) argue that metaphors evoke cultural and context dependent images in the source language whose nuances of meaning have no equivalents in the target culture. Other scholars embracing the second hypothesis do not think metaphor as a special case for translation and argue that it can be translated as well as any other linguistic phenomenon (Kloepfer 1981; Reiss 2004; Mason 1982). The defenders of the third hypothesis (Van den Broeck 1981; Toury 1985, 1995; Newmark 1988) believe that metaphors always present a degree of translatability according to their specific features. In our view, as we will demonstrate, there are different degrees of translatable metaphors: some fully, some partially, while some completely untranslatable. The degree of translation depends on the literal meaning and the correspondent translator's lexical choice as well as the availability of similar conceptual schema and/or images in the target culture. In the following, we will briefly show certain examples in which lexical semantics play a central role in the resolution of problems that typically emerge in translation. This is particularly crucial in the case of metaphor translation.

In some cases, and especially in the case of lexicalized metaphors, which are often grounded on widespread conceptual patterns (Kövecses 2005), metaphors are fully translatable. We can find, indeed, terms as *decollo* (in Italian), which can be translated as take-off (in English) thus preserving both the literal (airplane *take-off*) and the metaphorical senses (activity/enterprise/event take-off). Other cases of lexicalized metaphors can be found in table 2.1.

Source language	SL word	Target Language	TL word
Italian	ondata (referred to sea) ondata di gente (referred to people)	English	<i>wave</i> <i>wave</i>
Italian	quadretto (literal: picture) quadretto (metaphor: family)	English	<i>picture</i> <i>picture</i>

**Table 2.1.** Examples of 'fully translatable' lexicalized metaphors

Other lexicalized metaphors, on the contrary, require to be translated selecting one of the possible meanings. When we have lexicalized metaphors, sometimes, the translator is forced to change the image that the literal meaning suggests, because of the lexicon of the target language. For example, the Italian term *abbozzo*, that literally means sketch or outline, is translated into English as ghost in the lexicalized metaphor ‘*abbozzo di un sorriso*’ (*ghost of a smile*). A sketch or a ghost are completely different concepts that evoke different images: the translator has to find out, in the target language, an image that though different but can capture the correct meaning. Other examples are listed in table 2.2.

Source language	SL word	Target Language	TL word
Italian	aggancio (literal) aggancio (metaphorical)	English	<i>link</i> <i>(political) contact</i>
Italian	forte (literal) forte (metaphorical)	English	<i>strong</i> <i>loud</i>
Italian	paletto (literal) paletto (metaphorical)	English	<i>stake/pole/peg</i> <i>strict limit</i>
Italian	capitolo (literal) capitolo (metaphorical)	English	<i>chapter</i> <i>driving force</i>

**Table 2.2** Examples of ‘partially translatable’ lexicalized metaphors

In translation, lexicalized metaphors behave similarly to polysemy, probably because they share very similar concepts or conceptual frameworks in both source and target languages. Many cases of polysemy, for example, may be translated using a corresponding polysemy in the target language, because both words are ambiguous in a similar way in the source and the target language. For example the Italian word *ala*, which might mean both a wing of a bird or a building, can be correctly translated into English as wing and into French as *aile* (Federici *et al.* 2012). Another case is the Italian term *corsia*, which can refer to a swimming pool or to a street and can be translated into English with the word *lane* in both cases. Other cases are listed in table 2.3.

In other cases of polysemy, there is no single word that translates both meanings into the target language. The translator should then select one of the terms that disambiguate the polysemy of source language. This is the case with the Italian word *appello*, which means ‘exam’ but also ‘help’. In the first case, in English it can be translated as exam, but in the second it should be translated as *call*. Other cases are listed in table 2.4.

In the cases discussed above the whole range of lexical semantic information allows to solve the translation problems related to ambiguity

and polysemy. That is not always the case. Sometimes the translator does not find sufficient information in the source text to be able to find the right word for the target text (Bazzanella 2011). In such cases translation fails. For example, the Spanish word *pata* means both ‘paw’ and ‘leg’ (of an animal). If in the source text we do not find enough information about the context in which *pata* has been used, we would not be able to correctly translate it. Analogously the same thing happens with the English word fish, when we wish to translate it into Spanish, where the live fish is called *pez* and *pescado* the fish caught to be sold and eaten; and with the Italian word *nipote* where to understand its meaning, we need to know the degree of relationship among the involved people. Without this information, we will not be able to decide, for example, if in French whether it is *nièce* (niece/nephew) or *petite-fille* (grand-daughter). Sometimes this detailed information is missing in the source text, and the translation can easily fail, even if we paraphrase the text in the same language.

Source language	SL word	Target Language	TL word
Italian	appendice (book) appendice (body part)	English	appendix (book) appendix (body part)
Italian	espresso (coffee) espresso (train)	French	express (coffee) express (train)
Italian	corsia (of a swimming pool) corsia (of a street)	English	lane (of a swimming pool) lane (of a street)

**Table 2.3** Examples of ‘fully translatable’ polysemous words

Source language	SL word	Target Language	TL word
Italian	ferri (to knit) ferri (to operate)	English	<i>knitting needles</i> <i>surgical instruments</i>
Italian	barra (metal object) barra (graphic sign)	English	<i>bar</i> <i>slash</i>
Italian	borsa (wearing) borsa (accessorize) borsa (economy)	English	bag (accessorize) stock exchange (economy)

**Table 2.4** Examples of ‘partially translatable’ polysemous words

### 3. Translating novel metaphors

We can now provide some answers to the following questions: given that metaphors seem strongly related to lexical knowledge, in particular to source language lexical knowledge, is it actually possible to translate metaphors? From this perspective, is there a specificity in metaphor translation? Translation process does highlight that lexical knowledge plays a relevant role in both comprehension and the cognitive processes. A translation process presupposes the understanding of the varied aspects characterizing a text (Miller & Monti 2014). Besides the conceptual aspects, it is necessary to disambiguate morphological and syntactic levels, the logical form, the coherence among semantic restrictions and preferences of words. To establish equivalence between a source and a target text a translator should also understand other semantic and pragmatic aspects (for example conversational implicatures, metaphors, ironic contexts, etc.), that are not easily detectable. According to Max Black (1954: 293), when we translate a metaphor, we always fail in a sense, because

the relevant weakness of the literal paraphrases not that it may be tiresomely prolix or boringly explicit - or deficient in qualities of style; it fails to be a translation because it fails to give the insight that the metaphor did.

Nevertheless, we have seen that there are different cases of translation in which a metaphor can be maintained in the target text. The process of metaphor translation, as well as translation of polysemous word, seems to be faced by adopting different strategies:

1) keeping the same image and translating the metaphor using the same words in the target language (translation): that is the case of ‘*ondata di gente*’ translated into English as ‘wave of people’;

2) changing the image and finding in the target language a metaphor that can have an analogous meaning (substitution): that is the case of ‘*abbozzo di un sorriso*’ translated into English as ‘ghost of a smile’;

3) dissolving the metaphor into a simile or a paraphrase (paraphrase). That is often the case of live metaphors, which are inextricably linked to both lexical features of literal meaning and cultural-contextual cues. In the case of lexicalized or dead metaphor, understanding metaphors is a process very similar to understanding polysemy, as we have seen. Comprehension of both polysemy and metaphor, indeed, implies the creation of an *ad hoc* concept (Carston 2002). Different strategy has to be applied when we translate new and live metaphors. In this case lexical knowledge is not



enough to produce a translation in the target language. We need to use images and not only words. But, how do lexical components interact with images in metaphor translation?

In *Dire quasi la stessa cosa* (2003), Umberto Eco quoted, as an example of a live metaphor translation, the roof in Paul Valéry's poem *Le cimetière marin*, where the doves stroll as boats on the surface of the sea. Eco points out that the live metaphor of the roof as the sea works because in Paris the roofs are coloured blue-slate that releases metallic glares under the sun, but the metaphor is not easily translatable in another context where the roofs are imagined as red-coloured. In such a case cultural-contextual cues could be the reason for failure in translation. In other cases, lexical features of metaphor could cause a failure in translation and the translator has to resort to alternative strategies such as paraphrases, similes or a completely new and creative piece of work. An example being the spider as a metaphor of a man captures a fly, or in other words a woman, in his cobweb. The metaphor is used by Paola Capriolo in her story *Lettere a Luisa* included in the book *La grande Eulalia* (1988). The metaphor is quite complex because it depicts a possessive and haunting relationship between the protagonist and his quarry Luisa. The translation risks losing the exact image of human relationships evoked by the metaphor of the spider/fly. For instance, the feminine Italian term *mosca* (fly) is translated into French with the feminine term *mouche*, but also the masculine Italian term *ragno* (spider) is translated with a feminine term: *araignée*. Therefore the figurative relationship between a man and a woman is lost. The same problem is found in the translation into German, where both the term *ragno* and *mosca* are feminine, respectively *die Spinne* and *die Fliege* (Capriolo 2002). Another example is Eugenio Montale's translation into Italian of Emily Dickinson's *The storm*, where the 'Emerald Ghost' is the metaphor of wind which shares the green color with the metaphor of a snake as a shiver provoked by the movement of the grass on the earth. Both the metaphors contain a net of semantic associations, as well as phonetic features, not easily translatable into Italian, because of its being more polysyllabic than English. Montale decided to lose part of the semantic content to maintain the same rhythm and similar phonetic features of the original to create a new poetic image in the target culture.

In Robyn Carston's view, in the case of novel or literary metaphors, such as those described above, an alternative 'imaginative' route has to be hypothesized (Carston 2010; Carston & Wearing 2011). Metaphoric interpretation would maintain the literal meaning of the metaphorically used language, which undergoes a more global pragmatic process resulting in a

range of communicated affective and imagistic effects. By doing so, Carston allocates greater importance to the evocative power of images in metaphor understanding and reassesses Donald Davidson's view (1978), in which metaphors have "no other meaning than the literal one." The 'ulterior purpose' of a metaphor is indeed to produce an imagistic effect: "metaphor can, like a picture or a bump on the head, make us appreciate some fact but not by standing for, or expressing, the fact" (Davidson 1978: 46). For Davidson, in using a metaphor, the speaker is not conveying any other message other than the literal one, and the further imagistic effect of the metaphor is exactly due to its literal meaning. As Carston (2010: 319) explains:

images are not communicated but are activated or evoked when certain lexical concepts are accessed and may be further imaginatively developed (by, for instance, shifting mental focus or perspective, zooming in on detail, or forming a connected dynamic sequence) as the conceptual content of the utterance is recovered.

This hypothesis has been confirmed by experimental studies, which showed that in the process of metaphor interpretation, the corresponding literal meaning is not suppressed in a straightforward manner (Glucksberg, Newsome & Goldvarg 2001; Gernsbacher *et al.* 2001; Rubio Fernandez 2005, 2007) but rather remains to evoke further imagistic effects. This 'second route' to understanding metaphors does not exclude the *ad hoc* concepts mechanisms, i.e. a more conceptual way to metaphor understanding. However, the literal meaning endures in evoking an image with more important effects with respect to the first route. In the same vein, Stern noted: "No account of metaphor will be adequate without explaining the fact that something about the meaning of the literal vehicle remains active in metaphorical interpretation" (Stern 2006: 250).

#### **4. The specificity of metaphor translation**

Contrary to Carston's view, the interaction between lexis and imagination was not considered in the cognitive-semantic perspective *à la* Lakoff. Among the diverse criticisms made against cognitive semantics, there are indeed those according to which metaphor does not have much to do with the conceptual dimension of language comprehension, as with its imaginative dimension. According to the 'cognitivist' approach to mental imagery, images can be explained as clusters of concepts, thoughts, propositions, that

is to say ‘conceptual schemas’ rather than actual images. Others instead maintained that images were a code completely different from language. Indeed, the contemporary theories on mental imagery present two opposite perspectives. On the one hand, proponents of the ‘unique code’ believe that the only symbolic structure that allows humans to think, reason and talk would be kind of propositional-symbolic. On the other hand, pictorialists instead defend the idea that mental images have spatial and figural properties, which cannot be preserved through linguistic-propositional structures. This is the reason why philosophers, such as Davidson (1978: 359), maintained that cognitivist approach, in which

associated with a metaphor is a definite cognitive content that its author wishes to convey and that the interpreter must grasp if he is to get the message [...] is false as a full account of metaphor, whether or not we call the purported cognitive content a meaning.

Images have spatial and physical properties not completely transferable in propositional structures and linguistic sentences. Nevertheless this does not mean that images are literal copies of our visual experience (as shown in Ferretti 1998). The framework of our paper follows from this perspective: mental images are considered different from both equivalent propositional description and visual experience. They are not ‘pictures’ of what we see nor the effect of the perceptual activity of seeing. This peculiar ‘intermediate’ nature of mental images, allow them to play a creative role in cognitive processes: “Images are especially useful when we are in front of unusual or new situations, because they increase the amount of information that we can use to understand them” (Ferretti 1998: 14). Mental images are more powerful of implicit information encoded in linguistic structure, thanks to the possibility of representing information simultaneously, as it happens in visual systems (Ferretti 1998: 14-15). This is the case of live metaphors, which not only implicitly convey a piece of information, but also evoke a mental image strictly linked to the lexical features of the relative literal meaning as well as to the specific characteristics of the cultural context.

Newmark (1988) demonstrated that it is easy to translate dead or lexicalized metaphors literally than live metaphors, even though translation depends on the typology of a text in which the metaphor is used. Dead metaphors has to be indeed revitalized in expressive/emotional texts, where imagination plays a crucial role, so that the translation will consist in finding an equivalent image and not a literal word transposition (Ervás 2008, 2011). Furthermore, recent corpus based studies (Federici *et al.* 2012) show that

metaphor translation depends greatly on lexical knowledge richness and not only on the typology of the text. This is particularly clear in the case of live metaphors translation, as we saw in the example discussed in the previous paragraph. These examples highlight some specificities of metaphor translation useful to shed light on both general problems in translation and specific features of metaphor when compared to polysemy or other figures of speech. In translation theories we find at least two general perspectives: the ‘interlinguistic’ approaches which resort to an intermediate representation, which is a-linguistic and common to both source and target languages (‘interlanguage’, Hutchins 1986) and the ‘lexical-linguistic’ approaches which search for alignment and transformation rules of words in other words (Nagao 1984; Brown 1999; Turcato *et al.* 1999). Neither of the two is sufficient to explore and solve the translation process of a metaphoric expression, if metaphor has been invented in the discourse (Benveniste 1964, 1966) for the first time, on the basis of usage of words and literal concepts, as in the case of live metaphors.

Lexical knowledge is the required for a good translation of non-literal idiomatic or conventionalized expressions (Ruimy & Gola 2006). Even translation of live metaphors depend to a great extent on the richness and precision of lexical knowledge. It would not be possible to understand an expression such as “Internet has been a tsunami for publishing industry”, without knowing the lexical meaning of the word ‘tsunami’. However we could wonder whether there is a specificity of metaphor translation when compared to cases of polysemy. In our opinion there is. In polysemy and lexicalized metaphors – which are consolidated in lexical uses and underlying conceptual schema – there are indeed some correspondences in different languages which are in their turn consolidated by linguistic routine or previous translations. This is the case of the first translation strategy, where exactly the same image can be maintained in the target language. In such a case, there is no need for an effort in terms of innovation and imagination. In other cases, the same image cannot be used because it would not make sense in the target language, but transcultural equivalents are already there to fill the gap. This is the case of the second translation strategy, where for instance *ghost of a smile* is translated into Italian as *sketch of a smile (abbozzo di un sorriso)*. They are both lexicalized metaphors respectively in English and Italian, and even though they use a different semantic field and thus evoke different images, they fulfill readers’ or interlocutors’ expectations. Even though a *ghost* and a *sketch* do not share many properties apart from the fact of being the fade image of something,

they have a similar pragmatic effect in different linguistic and cultural contexts.

There is therefore a continuum of translation cases, which ranges from full to partial translatability. As the third translation strategy shows, live metaphors are easily prone to untranslatability or translation failures, as in the cases of Valéry's roof or Capriolo's spider, where the translator has to resort to paraphrasing or other *escamotages*. However, live metaphors are also the laboratory for new creation in the target language – as in the case of Dickinson's Emerald Ghost in Montale's translation. Here the specific aspect of live metaphors translation seems to be exactly the relationship between lexical knowledge and imagination. Lexis and imagination are indeed related and essential for metaphor comprehension in our language, as well as in others.

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