Interpreting Issues of Metaphors in Official Speech

Metaforų vertimo žodžiu problematika oficialioje kalboje

TRANSLATION / VERTIMAS

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The article focuses on issues which occur when interpreting metaphors in official speech. Metaphor as a figure of speech and a tool that helps to understand a way of thinking is inevitable in official speeches to make them more vivid. However, using metaphors in a native language and interpreting them are two different instances. Therefore, interpreters, presented with metaphors in relatively short official speeches, face a great number of difficulties. Even though official speeches have a special subject, intentional topic, and consistency, they can be filled by various tropes as well. Thus, the interpreter should be prepared that the speaker might be influenced by his/ her personal ideas about various figurative speech expressions. This raises the following questions: Do interpreters manage to construe all metaphorical expressions during simultaneous interpreting session of official speech? What specific professional knowledge is required for interpreters who mainly work with official register? The analysis of simultaneous interpreting session of one-minute Lithuanian and English official speeches provided by the European Parliament members has made it possible to conclude that interpreters manage to convey most of the metaphors from original language to target language even though they face quite a lot of difficulties.

KEYWORDS: metaphor translation, peculiarities of official speech, metaphors in official speech, issues of simultaneous interpreting, metaphor interpreting.

Introduction

The research of metaphors dates back to archaic times when the greatest philosophers have started to put an emphasis on this linguistic tool. The importance of metaphors in spoken and written language remains the same nowadays. However, since 20th century when G. Lakoff and M. Johnson (2003) have introduced a new perception towards metaphors, they are analysed not only according to linguistic aspects, but, also according to the basis of cognitive linguistics. Therefore, metaphors help to reveal how people understand and interpret different situations.

The usage of various metaphors in official speeches can help the speaker to find correct and precise words to express his/ her ideas. In addition, metaphors can help speech producer to avoid frank statements and allow listeners to interpret what has been said (Gadlin et al., 2006, p.30). Despite the linguistic advantages of metaphorical richness in the official speech, the interpreter who has to convey them during simultaneous interpreting session,

faces numerous constraints. In this situation the interpreter becomes a mediator between a speech producer and listeners.

As noted by Wadensjö (2013, p.9), interpreters become the channel of communication and producers of the text, thus, understanding and transferring hidden message into a target language is very important. Therefore, the analysis of interpreting issues of metaphors in official speech is a relevant topic for Applied Linguistics study field.

The object of the article is various English and Lithuanian metaphors in official one-minute speeches provided by Lithuanian members of the European Parliament.

The aim of the article is specified via hypothetical question: Do interpreters manage to convey all metaphorical expressions during simultaneous interpreting session of one-minute official speech?

Metaphors are analysed according to semantic trope change strategy (Chesterman and Wagner, 2002) and are grouped into conceptual metaphor lists (Lakoff et all, 1991).

The main analysis is carried out employing contrastive analysis which helps to note metaphors in original language and compare them in the target language (if metaphors are interpreted and how). With a help of frequency analysis, it is possible to calculate and evaluate which strategies of metaphor interpretation are the most common in this research.

Theoretical Background of the Research

The term *metaphor* has remained steady since the archaic times, however, the notion of it has remarkably changed. The definition of metaphor is greatly related with Greek language and culture. Bernard (1992, p.11) notifies that *meta* in Greek means *trans* and *pheiren* signifies the meaning of a verb *to carry*, thus, the term metaphor embraces the meaning of a verb *to transfer* or, more specifically, *to transfer the meaning*. As noted by researchers R. Gražytė and N. Maskaliūnienė (2009, p.71), until 1980's metaphors were understood only as stylistic figures of speech and tools that helped to make the text more appealing, dramatic, and convincing. The breakthrough of a new perception was noticed in the 20th century when G. Lakoff and M. Johnson (2003) initiated a new research field of conceptual metaphors and introduced a new perception that metaphors better expressed people's world view. Moreover, the authors stated that metaphors could reveal the way of thinking and reasons for doing various things in everyday life situations. Similarly, Bernard (1992, p.12) claims that metaphors can provide a new way of seeing the world.

With this approach and importance of metaphors, it is natural that these linguistic tools can be found in various registers, and official speeches are no exception. In most often cases, speech producers prefer conceptual metaphors rather than simple metaphorical expressions. In general, conceptual metaphors are analysed in cognitive linguistics and can help people to conceptualize and understand the world. As noted by Lakoff and Johnson (2003, p.272), conceptual metaphors are treated as being conceptual by nature, thus, metaphorical thoughts are unavoidable in everyday life situations. Another researched Gudavičius (2000, p.88) claims that in cognitive linguistics a metaphor is usually applied not to nominate something but to express the understanding of situation in a figurative way. According to Cruse (2006, p.32), conceptual metaphors are so imbedded in the way of thinking that sometimes people do not even realize that they are using conceptual metaphors instead of linguistically neutral expressions.

However, it is not sufficient only to comprehend the notion of conceptual metaphors, the most important thing is to understand a hidden message which is covered within the metaphor. According to Kovecses (2002, p.6), the way people grasp conceptual metaphors depends on their personal experience with the physical word. Therefore, interpreters who are presented with various metaphorical expressions during simultaneous interpreting sessions need to

have enough knowledge to understand what has been encoded by speech producer as well as provide the relevant message for listeners.

As the research field of the article focuses on official register, it is necessary to understand peculiarities of official speeches as well. Koženiauskienė (2001, pp.43–44) states that official speech is a specific form of communication with a special subject, intentional topic, consistency, and specific preparation. As noted by Nauckūnaitė (2001, p.44), the main idea of an official speech is to encode a message and (via the speech) send it to listeners who could decode that message and understand the main idea. Since the genre of an official speech is limited by various provisions, using metaphors in official speeches is very unequivocal. According to Koženiauskienė (2001, p.210), metaphors related with public register are connected more with the way of thinking rather than the imagination. Therefore, Gražytė and Maskaliūnienė (2009, p.72) similarly claim that nowadays when metaphors are treated not only as language devices but as the way of thinking, public speeches have more metaphors than ever before. Koženiauskienė (2001, p.210) points out that metaphors become settled down in our lives, and, listeners may not notice the speaker's preference to use metaphors instead of linguistically neutral expressions. However, interpreters, who are presented with metaphors in official speeches, have to convey the message in such a way that the audience wouldn't have any doubts about losing the main idea.

Official one-minute English and Lithuanian speeches chosen as an object of the analysis are provided by Lithuanian members of the European Parliament. All the members of the Parliament have a right to present one-minute speeches in their native language or use one of the official languages of the Parliament. At the same time, interpreters in sound-proofed booths have to interpret the speech into all official languages. The interpretation is transmitted to headphones that are worn by other members of the Parliament. Topics of one-minute speeches can be very different but they are mostly related to the main issues of the European Union. Therefore, interpreters who work in the Parliament not only have to be fluent in at least two languages, but also be familiar with current news and events. Members of the Parliament have a fixed time for speaking and they usually read their speeches very quickly. Therefore, interpreters should be fully concentrated at all times and prepared for the whole interpreting session (online source: The European Parliament's Interpreters)

In general, interpreters who work in the European Parliament have a lot of experience with parliamentary simultaneous interpreting techniques. According to Pöchhacker (2004, p.16), parliamentary or conference interpreting activity emerged only in the early 20th century. Thus, the research field of it is relatively new. As Wadensjö (2013, p.5) states, the quality of each interpretation mainly depends on interpreters' cognitive skills. Therefore, it is possible to assume that if interpreter does not have enough specific cognitive skills, he/ she might be faced with difficulties to quickly grasp hidden message of the speech, especially, if the official speech contains metaphoric expressions. Another peculiarity of simultaneous interpreting is the interpreters' ability to work *in real time* and with different contexts (Jones, 2002, p.6). According to the author, the interpreter needs to be able to quickly analyse the speech. Besides that, interpreting of metaphors requires not only the basic linguistic but also some extra linguistic and cognitive skills as well (Jones, 2002, p.72).

When theoretical notion of metaphors and official speeches is covered, it is important to analyse what metaphor interpreting strategies can be applied. With reference to Wadensjö (2013, p.122), when interpreter faces inconveniences he/ she has to make sudden decisions that will help to sustain the main idea. The same option is applied when interpreter is presented with various metaphorical expressions. Since there are no separate strategies for the process of interpreting, it is possible to assume that interpreters can use strategies

provided for the process of translation. This phenomenon can be proved by the fact that the interpreter can omit the part of the text, explain it in a more detailed way or use other strategies. In general, interpreting session could be compared with an unpredictable process of exchanging information without any common rules that could be applied by interpreters.

Nauckūnaitė (2001, p.130) points out that metaphors can be treated as tropes and analysed according to semantic trope change translation strategy given by Chesterman and Wagner (2002). The authors provide explanation of trope change strategy and claim that this strategy can be employed to change the use of figurative expressions such as metaphors, personifications, etc. According to Chesterman and Wagner (2002, p.62), there are four main types of this semantic translation strategy *(1. Source language trope X is maintained as trope X in target language, i.e. the metaphor is identical; 2. Source language trope X is changed into trope Y in target language, i.e. metaphor of source language is changed into different metaphor in target language; 3. Source language trope X is changed into trope Ø in target language, i.e. metaphor is not maintained; 4. Trope Ø in source language is changed into trope X in target language, i.e. metaphor is used in target language while there is no metaphor in source language).* The latter strategy helps to analyse how tropes (metaphors) can be conveyed form a source to a target language.

Another approach towards metaphors in official speeches can be taken via conceptual metaphor lists provided by Lakoff *et all* (1991) where metaphors are grouped into specific categories: *Force is a substance directed at an affected party, State is a person, Argument is war, Being harmed is being given an undesirable possession, Progress in forward motion, Communication is speech, Communication is showing, Means to solving is means to opening, Influence is a force, Adversity due to bad weather, Mental control is hand control, Bad is down, Manipulation in physical manipulation, Purposes are destinations, Getting is eating, Time is money.* The list provided by the author shows how such type of metaphors can be understood, grouped, and analysed regarding source and target languages.

As mentioned above, there are no specific metaphor interpreting strategies that can help interpreters to transfer the main idea of a speech to listeners. However, interpreters can always employ the most common metaphor (trope) translation strategies that can be very useful during simultaneous interpreting session as well.

Methodology (Results and Discussion)

The interpreting analysis of Lithuanian and English metaphors in one-minute official speeches is carried out from a selection of examples (out of 20 videos of plenary debates 146 metaphors are selected: 109 Lithuanian and 37 English). As mentioned above, Lithuanian members of the Parliament can produce their speeches both in Lithuanian and English, thus, selection of metaphors in both languages is equal. The main selection of Lithuanian and English metaphors in one-minute official speeches is carried out manually, i.e. watching and listening the same plenary debate twice for original version as well as interpretation and recording metaphorical expressions on paper (both in original and interpreted versions). Main topics of official speeches are related to current issues of the European Union and the entire world. Even though these speeches are called *one-minute*, it does not literally mean that they only last for one-minute period. However, there is an agreement that the speech cannot exceed the limit of 2.5 minutes (online source: European Parliament Plenary).

The main analysis of interpreting issues of metaphors in official speeches is carried out employing contrastive descriptive and frequency analysis. With a help of contrastive descriptive analysis, it is possible to compare metaphors in a source language and a target language (if and how metaphors are interpreted). In addition to that, it is important to discuss if metaphorical expression in a target language is clear and understandable for target

listeners. Frequency analysis helps to find out which strategies are the most commonly used by interpreters and what type of metaphors are the most frequent in official one-minute speeches provided by members of the European Parliament.

To understand the analysis clearly, metaphors are abbreviated as following: SL – examples of metaphors in source language and TL – examples of metaphors in target language. The examples are provided separately: LT-EN and EN-LT. All the selected metaphors are analysed according to two methods: *trope change strategy* provided by Chesterman and Wagner (2002) as well as grouping into *conceptual metaphor lists* provided by Lakoff *et. all.* (1991).

The approach towards metaphors via Chestermans' and Wagners' perspective of trope change semantic translation strategy helps to identify how metaphors can be (or if they are) converted from an original language to a target language.

First group of the strategy represents a category where *trope X of source language is maintained as the same trope X in target language.* In other words, metaphors in source and target languages are semantically and lexically identical.

Examples LT-EN:

> SL – ***Europos Sąjunga turi padaryti keletą pamokų.*** TL – ***The EU should*** really ***learn the lessons***; SL – ***Europos Sąjunga*** *šiandien* ***stovi kryžkelėje***; TL – ***The EU*** right now ***is on the crossroad***;

Examples EN-LT:

> SL – ***Now we see the ghosts of Soviet Union***. TL – ***Dabar mes matome Tarybų Sąjungos šmėklas***; SL – ***Russia is punishing Lithuania***; TL – ***Rusija baudžia Lietuvą.***

As we see from the examples, tropes in target language (no matter if they are from LT-EN or from EN-LT) are lexically and semantically identical. In case of using back translation strategy, the same trope would be obtained. It is possible to state that this trope change strategy is the most popular among interpreters in the EU Parliament (114 examples in total out of 146; 84 examples from LT-EN and 30 examples from EN-LT). This phenomenon can be explained by the fact that interpreters who work in the Parliament are fluent in at least two languages and they understand the meaning of most metaphorical expressions. In addition to that, interpreters who have been working here for an extensive time, may even anticipate ideas provided by members of the EU Parliament, since topics and expressions are repetitive and often used as clichés. Moreover, the selected way of translation does not indicate any evidence of word-for-word translation, since interpreters apply and use proper equivalents in target languages (Lithuanian and English). Examples which are indicated above reveal that in most often occurrences countries or unions are compared with people. For example, the European Union is compared with a student who must prepare lessons and Russia is described as a powerful governor who can punish Lithuania. This method aids listeners to understand that these metaphorical expressions hide a clear and precise message (the EU is not prepared as a student, Russia seems to be stronger than Lithuania, the EU cannot decide upon specific question, since it stands at a crossroad; ghosts of Soviet Union are mentioned as well).

Another group of trope change semantic translation strategy occurs when *trope X of source language is changed into trope Y in target language (tropes are different in source and target languages).*

Examples LT-EN:

> SL – ***Visą mėnesį mes patiriame Rusijos nemalonę***. TL – ***For whole month Lithuania is in the cloud of Russia***; SL – ***Gyvais fakelais tapo jau beveik 100 tibetiečių;*** TL – ***Almost 100 of people*** there ***have sacrificed their lives*** for that;

Examples EN–LT:

> SL – ***Ukraine must prepare the economic ground***. TL – ***Ukraina turi atlikti namų darbus.*** SL – ***Ukraine and EU should try together***. TL – ***Ukraina ir ES turi dirbti ranka rankon.***

In comparison with the first trope change strategy where tropes are maintained the same, this method is not very common (out of 146 examples there were only 9 examples: 7 from LT-EN and 2 form EN-LT). This phenomenon can be explained by the fact that during relatively short simultaneous interpreting session, interpreters do not have enough time to think about an intentional possibility to look for another metaphor in a target language. However, sometimes the interpreter can provide even more efficient metaphorical expression than it has been used in a source language (for example, *Visą mėnesį* **mes patiriame Rusijos nemalonę** and *For whole month* ***Lithuania is in the cloud of Russia*** or ***Ukraine and EU should try together*** and ***Ukraina ir ES turi dirbti ranka rankon***). In general, it is possible to assume that this trope change strategy requires more efforts than using other strategies, since interpreters are facing a risk to be misunderstood. In this way, the interpreter has to be sure if the metaphorical expression which he/ she has selected exists in a target language and if listeners will not have any doubts about the overall quality of interpretation.

The third trope change semantic translation strategy describes a method when *a trope X in the source language exists but after the process of interpretation no trope is retained.*

Examples LT–EN:

> SL – *Todėl* **būtina rasti susikalbėjimo su Rusijos pareigūnais raktą**; TL – *Not interpreted;*
> SL – *Europos Sąjunga ir Ukraina nepadarė visko, kad* **ant partnerystės sutarties būtų sudėti visi taškai**. TL – *We have to admit that* **Ukrain***e itself* **and institutions of European Union failed to finalize the partnership agreement entirely***;*

Example EN–LT:

> SL – ***Time is really precious*** in this case; TL – *Not interpreted;*

After gathering all metaphorical expressions, it appears that out of 146 examples there have been 25 cases which suit the latter trope change translation strategy (21 from LT-EN and 4 from EN-LT). The choice of this trope change strategy is very useful especially in cases when interpreter does not know the equivalent of a trope in a target language. Based on the examples above, this strategy can be used in two ways: either omitting metaphorical expression and moving to another passage of the speech or simplifying and expressing metaphors in other words. Due to the main cultural and linguistic differences which occur among source and target languages, sometimes it is simply impossible to transfer the same metaphorical expression from a source into a target language; for example, (*kad ant partnerystės sutarties būtų sudėti visi taškai*) is changed into a simple expression (*to finalize the partnership agreement entirely*). In different situations when the interpreter cannot find proper equivalent of a metaphor in a target language, he/ she can use this trope omission strategy, since the most important thing overall is not to lose the main idea of a speech.

The last trope change strategy indicates the case where *there is no trope in source language, but trope X occurs in target language.* Although, this strategy is equally important as other strategies, but after gathering all the examples, it turned out that no one fits into this group. This phenomenon could be explained by the fact that metaphor interpreting is quite a challenging task and if the interpreter does not hear any metaphorical expression in a source language he/ she most probably will not think about a possible a metaphor in a target language, especially, when the time for consideration is very limited. Moreover, using

metaphor in a context where there are no metaphors used in a source language can be challenging to avoid misunderstandings and maintain the same idea of an original speech. In these situations, interpreters can express the main idea in linguistically neutral words.

The analysis of metaphor interpreting based on semantic trope change strategy reveals that these strategies for metaphor interpreting can be very useful. While originally semantic trope change strategies are mainly used for translation process, omission, addition, keeping or changing tropes from a source to a target language can also be widely used by interpreters.

Metaphor analysis according to conceptual metaphor lists

Analysis of metaphor interpreting in one-minute official speeches could be made employing conceptual metaphor lists provided by Lakoff *et. all* (1991).

The first list *State is a person* contains one of the highest number of examples out of all metaphorical expressions collected from the survey samples (46 metaphors out of 146).

Examples LT-EN:

SL – ***Rusija visiškai sugadino savo įvaizdį pasaulyje***; TL – ***Russia had entirely spoilt the reputation in the world***. SL – ***Ukraine must reform its economy***; TL – ***Ukraina turi reformuoti savo ekonomiką***.

The following results why the list *State is a person* contains the highest number of examples could be explained by the fact that all one-minute speeches are related with particular country, institution, or event. In this way, using metaphors helps a speaker to avoid frank comparisons and strong statements. For instance, *Rusija visiškai sugadino savo įvaizdį pasaulyje* indicates that either Russia was weak (as a person) and did not manage to defend itself or that it has done something inappropriate. Another example *Ukraine must reform its economy* indirectly shows that Ukraine (as a person) should make some changes to reform its economic state. As the examples show, interpreting does not change a category of metaphor, so, interpreted metaphors still belong to the same list.

Another metaphor list which contains most of examples is *Argument is war* (in total, 23 examples out of 146).

Example LT-EN:

SL – ***Lietuvos tauta stovėjo prieš Sovietų armiją***. TL – ***We were standing*** side by side, ***we were fighting against Soviet army***.

Example EN-LT:

SL – ***We call on the government of the country to immediately hold all repressive methods***. TL – ***Mes šalies vyriausybę raginame tuojau pat sustabdyti represyvinius metodus***.

The presence of war related metaphors in one-minute official Parliamentary speeches represents quite a tense situation in the entire world. However, for the most part, war-related metaphors are not literally connected with a real war situation, therefore, they represent small conflicts or defence of arguments. In general, speakers may use *Argument is war* metaphors to speak about serious topics avoiding frank statements. However, sometimes interpreters might face difficulties in searching for the equivalent of the metaphor in a target language as in example ***Lietuvos tauta stovėjo prieš Sovietų armiją – We were standing*** side by side, ***we were fighting against Soviet army***. In this occurrence, it is necessary to invoke a strategy of expanded interpreting. Despite this fact, it is possible to state that war-related metaphorical expression in source and target languages are quite similar, so, interpreters might not face a lot of problems during simultaneous interpreting session.

Other conceptual metaphor lists have had only a few examples of metaphorical expressions. However, interpreting tendencies are maintained the same as in most popularly used lists *State is a person* and *Argument is war.* Interpreters either find the same equivalent in a target language, use expanded interpreting strategies, or omit metaphorical expression altogether.

Conclusions

The overview of academic literature yields to a conclusion that although metaphors have been analysed since the early times, the attitude towards these figures of speech has remarkably changed. Since the 20th century more attention has been given to conceptual metaphors that can help to reveal human thinking patterns. Manual selection of metaphorical expressions in one-minute official speeches at the EU Parliament shows that metaphors are commonly used by Parliament members (20 videos of plenary debates – 146 metaphorical expressions; 109 in Lithuanian and 37 in English). The analysis based on *trope change strategies* demonstrates that the most commonly used strategy among interpreters is where *trope X in source language is maintained as the same trope X in target language* (78 per cent of all the examples). Another trope change strategy when *trope X of source language is changed into trope Ø in target language* has been detected in 25 cases and makes up 17 per cent. The trope change strategies of metaphor omission or usage of a trope when there is no trope in a source language have been used only several times (respectively, 5 and 0 per cent of all the examples). Based on the approach towards metaphor interpreting via *conceptual metaphor lists*, it is possible to conclude that the most common metaphors in one-minute official speeches are related to the cases of states/ countries' comparison to a person (*State is a person – 31 per cent of all the examples)* and war-related topic *(Argument is war – 15 per cent of all the examples).* The overall analysis of metaphor interpreting in official speeches makes it possible to conclude that decision of transferring metaphorical expression from a source to a target language depends on the interpreter. For most part, metaphors can be interpreted into semantically and lexically identical equivalents in a target language. However, sometimes it is possible to modify the metaphor or simply omit it and still maintain the same message of the original speech. The analysis proves that primarily hypothetical question of interpreters' ability to interpret metaphors during an official speech from a source into a target language can be positively confirmed. The analysis shows that 78 per cent of metaphorical expressions have been interpreted as semantically and lexically identical metaphors in a target language, even though members of the Parliament are producing their speeches in a quick mode and interpreters have to work without any preparation. This phenomenon can be explained by the fact that interpreters who work in the EU Parliament are often presented with various metaphorical expressions on a day to day basis and are able to anticipate some further ideas or expressions such as clichés in numerous official speeches.

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Santrauka

Inga Stadalninkaitė. Metaforų vertimo žodžiu problematika oficialioje kalboje

Straipsnyje pagrindinis dėmesys skiriamas metaforų vertimo žodžiu oficialiose kalbose problematikai, siekiant išsiaiškinti, kaip ir ar išvis yra išverčiamos lietuviškos bei angliškos metaforos vienos minutės Lietuvos europarlamentarų kalbose. Metaforos, kaip kalbiniai raiškos vienetai, suteikiantys tekstui gyvybingumo, yra tiriamos bei analizuojamos jau nuo senų laikų. Tačiau maždaug nuo 20-ojo amžiaus požiūris į metaforas labai pasikeitė ir jas ėmė nagrinėti ne tik lingvistikos atstovai, bet ir tyrėjai iš kitų mokslų sričių. Šiuo atveju metaforos labiau atskleidžiamos ne tik per lingvistinius aspektus, bet per žmonių mąstymo būdą (konceptualiosios metaforos padeda išsiaiškinti kaip žmonės supranta įvairias situacijas). Kadangi dažnas metaforų vartojimas neatsiejamas įvairių oficialių žanrų tekstuose, tyrimo objektu pasirinktos oficialios vienos minutės kalbos. Prieš analizės pateikimą iškeltas hipotetinis klausimas *Ar vertėjai žodžiu sugeba tinkamai ir ar išvis išverčia vienos minutės oficialiose kalbose išgirstas metaforas?* Atlikta metaforų vertimo žodžiu problematikos analizė leidžia daryti prielaidą, kad, nepaisant jokio išankstinio pasiruošimo, greitai sakomų oficialių kalbų ir skirtingų temų, vertėjai žodžiu sugeba perteikti didžiąją dalį metaforų iš originalo kalbos į vertimo kalbą.

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