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Metaphors we get infected by. Political metaphors in simultaneous interpreting – A German-Spanish corpus analysis

Abstract

Metaphors we get infected by. Political metaphors in simultaneous interpreting – A German-Spanish corpus analysis

This article investigates the treatment of political metaphors in simultaneous interpreting between German and Spanish during plenary debates of the European Parliament in 2020, the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic. The study is grounded in cognitive and traditional metaphor theories and examines whether interpreters preserve the metaphor's function and imagery when transferring it from the source to the target language. The analysis is based on a corpus of 142 speeches, comprising 64 selected metaphorical expressions. The research applies both qualitative and quantitative methods to assess functional consistency and categorize interpreting strategies such as omission, demetaphorization, retention, intensification, and explicitation. One third of the metaphors was retained with full functional consistency, while another third was omitted or demetaphorized. The findings suggest that ontological and conventionalized metaphors are more likely to be preserved, whereas coherence-preserving or emotionally charged metaphors are often lost in interpretation, likely due to cognitive constraints or the fast-paced nature of parliamentary debates. Contrary to earlier claims that metaphors are particularly problematic in simultaneous interpreting, this study finds evidence of interpreters' strategic awareness and efforts to maintain metaphorical meaning when possible. The results support the integration of metaphor competence into interpreter training and indicate that further research combining corpus analysis with interviews or real-time observations would be beneficial to understand decision-making processes in depth.

Keywords: metaphor analysis, simultaneous interpreting, conceptual metaphor, interpreting quality, COVID-19

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1. Introduction

The present article is a condensed version of a Master's thesis, the results of which were presented at the Austrian Linguistics Conference in December 2023 at the University of Graz during the workshop "New Perspectives on the Relationship between Linguistics and Translation Studies." The thesis emerged from the intention to develop a linguistically oriented research project within the framework of Translation Studies, focusing on a topic that would allow for empirically grounded and practically observable results. The COVID-19 discourse was chosen because hardly any other event has had such a profound impact on our lives in recent years. Interpreting is a highly complex activity in itself. Various complicating factors such as high speech rate or syntactic complexity are frequently discussed in the course of interpreter training. However, aesthetic aspects such as metaphors seem to receive more attention in (literary) translation courses than in interpreting classes.

This study analyses how interpreters deal with metaphors in a particularly demanding interpreting setting, namely the plenary sessions of the European Parliament, in the language pair German–Spanish. The relative cultural and linguistic proximity between German and Spanish can be seen as an advantage, but it might also increase the risk of interference. The aim of the study is to investigate whether interpreters succeed in transferring the function of the respective metaphor from the source text to the target text, and how they deal with metaphorical expressions more generally. In addition, the study examines how interpreting influences the degree of metaphoricity in the target-language expression.

The article is structured accordingly: the first part outlines the theoretical foundations necessary to frame and understand the phenomenon of metaphor and to ensure the comprehensibility of the findings (see sections 2 to 5), while the subsequent section presents the corpus analysis based on a series of representative examples (see section 8).

The definition of the phenomenon of metaphor and the history of the scientific debate on the subject will be briefly outlined, in order to then analyze metaphor against the background of the COVID-19 discourse. Analyzing authentic linguistic data appeared to be the most appropriate method for the research objective and was facilitated by the European Parliament's publicly available Multimedia Centre. The initially monolingual conceptualization and description of the metaphor phenomenon is linked with a characterization of political language. Metaphors are frequently employed in political discourse and the outreach to the general public have been described by a number of academic disciplines as fruitful tools for its analysis. Although the topic concerned a public health crisis and medical aspects of the pandemic, the discourse in the European Parliament in 2020 was framed primarily in political terms. The metaphor, as a multifaceted communication tool, which has numerous functions

and can be categorized in various ways, is examined on the basis of two key works in the field of interpreting studies that are of particular relevance for the present article.

2. Metaphor as a phenomenon

The present chapter provides a historical and theoretical overview of the phenomenon of metaphor. It aims to explain the inherent and definitional dynamic of transfer, which forms the basis for the dual conceptualization of metaphor adopted in this study. The chapter also addresses the categorization and identification of metaphors, both of which are fundamental to the empirical part of the study.

The 2000-year academic debate on the concept of metaphor can be described in three stages: the stylistic-semantic understanding of metaphor, the pragmatic approach, and finally the cognitive-scientific perspective (Endruschat/ Ferreira 2010: 13–28). With their seminal work *Metaphors We Live By* Lakoff and Johnson (1980) initiated a paradigm shift, that relocated the phenomenon of metaphor to the cognitive level and has since been regarded as a starting point for the cognitive study of the phenomenon (Beaton 2007: 285). Scholarly reflection on metaphor and its theoretical conceptualization has existed since antiquity. However, these approaches have often considered metaphor as deviant language use or discourse ornaments (Endruschat/ Ferreira 2010: 13–28). From a cognitive perspective, metaphorical transfer does not occur at the word level but rather at the conceptual level (Cameron 1999b: 14, 19; Low 1999; Schäffner 1991: 79, 88). The core principle of metaphor is that a concrete, familiar, and (physically) experienced source domain is transferred to a generally abstract target domain (Kövecses 1986; Schäffner 1991). The metaphor is interpreted through the conceptual frame(work) set by the choice of metaphor (Schäffner 1991: 79, 88), whereby certain characteristics can be highlighted or downplayed depending on the selected source domain (Lakoff/ Johnson 1980: 10). Lakoff and Johnson (1980: 10) describe the human conceptual system as "metaphorical in nature" (Lakoff/ Johnson 1980: 4), thus, metaphors are essential not only for how we speak, but also for how we think and subsequently perceive and categorize reality, which in turn influences how we act (Lakoff/ Johnson 1980: 3–9).

This study adopts an understanding of metaphor that encompasses both conceptual metaphor structures and their linguistic realizations, in line with the dual analytical framework outlined below (Deignan 1999: 184). Based on the findings of Vuorikoski (2004) and Beaton (2007), who both compiled corpora from European Parliament discourse, it can be assumed that combining different analytical perspectives may prove fruitful for the present corpus analysis. The dual approach adopted in this study therefore operates on two

complementary levels: first, a conceptual-cognitive perspective that identifies underlying metaphorical mappings, and second, a traditional descriptive framework that classifies and analyzes individual metaphorical expressions as they occur in discourse.

Accordingly, the working definition encompasses both conceptual metaphors manifested in speech and conventionalized metaphorical expressions, including culturally established metaphors originating from sources such as Greek mythology or the Bible (Vuorikoski 2004). The two theoretical foundations drawn upon are cognitive metaphor theory (Lakoff/ Johnson 1980) and the traditional classification model proposed by Van den Broeck (1981).

Lakoff and Johnson (1980: 61) distinguish three types of conceptual metaphors: structural, orientational, and ontological metaphors. Structural metaphors structure one complex concept in terms of another by mapping a systematic set of relations from a source domain onto a target domain. This structuring process, like conceptual metaphor more broadly, results in the "highlighting and hiding" of particular aspects of the target concept (Lakoff/ Johnson 1980: 61). Orientational metaphors structure concepts through spatial oppositions such as UP-DOWN or CENTRAL-PERIPHERAL and serve, among other functions, to organize and quantify abstract concepts (Lakoff/ Johnson 1980: 14). Ontological metaphors, in contrast, render abstract concepts tangible by representing them as concrete entities, for example in the form of CONTAINER metaphors or personifications (Lakoff/ Johnson 1980: 25). While Lakoff and Johnson's framework focuses on conceptual metaphor structures, Van den Broeck's (1981) classification, as presented in Koller (1992: 254), approaches metaphor from a different analytical perspective rooted in literary studies. Rather than distinguishing types of conceptual mappings, it categorizes metaphors according to their degree of conventionalization or lexicalization. Three categories are distinguished along a continuum: lexicalized or "dead" metaphors, which are only recognizable as figurative from a historical-linguistic perspective; conventionalized metaphors, which are still perceived as figurative; and creative or so-called occasional metaphors. The latter are speaker-specific and exhibit the highest degree of metaphoricity.

The identification of a metaphor is achieved by revealing domain incongruity (Cameron 1999a: 118). By determining the literal meaning of each lexical unit and relating it to its immediate context, metaphorical, that is, transferred language use is made visible (Group Pragglejaz 2007: 3).

3. Metaphor functions and political discourse

This section aims to further illustrate the scope of the metaphor phenomenon by first discussing general metaphor functions and then focusing on the specificity of political discourse and how metaphors lend themselves to its

analysis. The presentation of five domain-unspecific metaphor functions—which may overlap or occur in combination (Schäffner 1991, 1995)—is of particular relevance to the empirical part of this study, as one of the research questions directly addresses them. Characterizing political discourse and its analysis also serves to provide a conceptual bridge to the following chapter, which focuses on the discourse surrounding COVID-19.

The most important function is considered to be illustration or visualization: metaphors transfer familiar, concrete source domains onto abstract target domains, which makes complex content more comprehensible (Lakoff/ Johnson 1980: 5; Schäffner 1991: 79–80; Schmitt 2017: 49; Vuorikoski 2004: 163). Metaphors thus serve as heuristic and cognitive tools (Chilton/ Ilyin 1993: 9; Schäffner 1991: 88–89). The persuasive or manipulative effect of metaphors, which can be strategically employed in political discourse to evoke emotions, mobilization or appeasement, for example, is considered another central function (Beaton 2007: 277f; Rentel 2019: 5, 7; Schäffner 1991: 76). The choice of metaphor influences which aspects are highlighted or hidden (Lakoff/ Johnson 1980), thus allowing for the transmission of ideological content or the motivation of actions. Metaphors also fulfill a structural function within the text. They create coherence and help organize discourse (Beaton 2007: 277f; Schäffner 1991: 89). Furthermore, metaphors can reflect the speaker's attitude. The selection of the source domain leads to a selective portrayal of reality (Rentel 2019: 4; Wehling 2016: 18). Accordingly, metaphors can serve as diplomatic tools, enabling speakers to address sensitive topics indirectly (Chilton/ Ilyin 1993: 9, 16; Vuorikoski 2004: 163). Finally, metaphors can constitute a means of expressing creativity, particularly in the case of novel or occasional metaphors (Chilton/ Ilyin 1993: 10; Koller 1992: 254; Pérez-Sobrino et al. 2022: 127).

The corpus analysis indicates that the metaphor functions discussed in the literature are clearly observable in political discourse and serve specific communicative purposes within this institutional context. In particular, metaphors contribute to framing issues, structuring arguments, and performing euphemistic or face-saving functions. Rather than functioning merely as stylistic embellishment, they play a central role in shaping meaning and perspective.

Vuorikoski (2004: 153) emphasizes that in political discourse, interpreting the propositional meaning of a statement alone is insufficient, as ideological content must also be taken into account. Similarly, Schäffner (1991: 76) argues that political language serves to assert interests that are conveyed linguistically, often in subtle ways.

Some of the most common conceptual metaphors used in political discourse are the PATH METAPHOR underlying linguistic expressions like "steps on the way", "a long way ahead", "standing at the crossroads of", "having a roadmap", the BALANCE METAPHOR; the WAR or (FIST)FIGHT METAPHOR; the CONTAINER

METAPHOR and many more (Schäffner 1991: 81, 85–86, 1995: 82f; Schmitt 2017: 319).

There is a strong consensus among scholars who, because of what has been outlined in the present section, consider metaphors a central tool of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) (Vaughan 1995: 64). Just as it is the aim of Critical Discourse Analysis to uncover power relations in discourse (Charteris-Black 2004; Schmitt 2017), Critical Metaphor Analysis (CMA), developed by Charteris-Black (2004: 34–40), aims to reveal their underlying ideological framing and political conceptualizations. The three steps of Critical Metaphor Analysis are to first identify metaphors in political discourse, then proceed to interpret them by taking into account their cognitive and pragmatic context. The last step consequently consists in revealing the metaphors' implicit meanings.

Understanding metaphor functions and the motivations underlying the selection or avoidance of specific metaphors allows for a more precise analysis of metaphor use in COVID-19 discourse. As Chiang and Duann (2007: 587, 597) argue, discourse surrounding COVID-19 in institutional contexts must be understood as political discourse. However, this political discourse frequently draws on medical source domains. For this reason, the features of political language outlined above are complemented by a description of medical and COVID-19-related metaphors in order to account for the interaction between political framing and medical conceptualization.

4. Metaphors in the COVID-19 discourse

Medical discourse is generally characterized by WAR metaphors such as INVASION or COLONIZATION, alongside other source domains that are common to both political and health discourses (Escribano Hernández 2022: 22; Schmitt 2017: 280, 283). According to Schmitt (2017: 271), spatial and objectifying metaphors dominate the European conception of health, portraying illness as an object and conceptualizing the human body as a machine that can be repaired, with medical professionals framed as technicians intervening in malfunctioning parts (cf. Warner 1976). The discourse surrounding the SARS epidemic in the early 2000s was likewise dominated by WAR metaphors, supplemented by concepts such as DISASTER, NATURAL CATASTROPHE, or CRISIS (Chiang/ Duann 2007: 587, 597). Recognizing these source domains enables a systematic comparison with metaphor use in COVID-19 discourse.

A growing body of research has examined the use of metaphor in COVID-19 discourse. Escribano Hernández (2022: 23) observes that similar or even identical metaphors were employed worldwide during the pandemic. COVID-19 has frequently been conceptualized through WAVE-LIKE MOVEMENT, referring both to infection rates and to waves of disinformation (Craig 2020: 1028). In addition,

Craig (2020: 1026) identifies MILITARY metaphors as particularly dominant in public discourse. Pérez-Sobrino et al. (2022: 128) further highlight the use of MACHINE metaphors such as "restart" or "activate" in economic contexts and note that even the term "lockdown" carries metaphorical meaning.

5. Metaphors in translation studies

Having described and situated the phenomenon of metaphor monolingually in the first part of the present article, the focus now shifts to the transcultural and interlingual perspectives on the subject. The engagement with metaphor began quite early on in translation studies, leading to the existence of two opposing schools of thought, namely the prescriptive, represented for example by Newmark (1980) and the descriptive, represented, among others, by Toury (1995). In interpreting studies and interpreter training, however, metaphor is mostly discussed in terms of the particular challenges it poses.

For a transcultural or interlingual discussion of metaphor, the language pair in question is of great relevance: The present study examined original texts that were interpreted from German into Spanish and vice versa. Despite the structural and cultural proximity between the two languages, differences such as Spanish's tendency toward verbalization and German's tendency toward nominalization and compound formation can complicate translation (cf. Endruschat 2010: 61ff). Superficial equivalence or conceptual similarities can be deceptive, since the source domain of a metaphor can carry different cultural connotations (Chilton/ Ilyin 1993: 13, 23). Even grammatical details, such as the use of articles, can influence metaphorical meaning, making direct comparability problematic despite conceptual similarities (Osthus 2010: 175).

In addition to linguistic similarities and differences, the interpreting mode and setting in which interpreting takes place can have a significant impact on the challenges and expectations involved. For this reason, the simultaneous mode and the European Parliament as the interpreting setting will now be characterized, serving as a transition to the empirical part of this study. Simultaneous interpreting is characterized by the parallel processing of psycholinguistic operations, occurring simultaneously with the divided attention required for reception and production (Pöchhacker 2016: 119–122). The ephemeral nature of the source text and the lack of time make certain (compensatory) strategies available in translation impossible when handling metaphors in interpreting settings (Bachmann-Medick 2004: 157; Newmark 1980: 95–97; Prunč 2005: 244; Toury 1995: 82). In principle, it can be inferred from the requirement profiles outlined by organizations such as AIIC (Association Internationale des Interprètes de Conférence), researchers, and universities that metaphors present in the source text should also be rendered in an adapted and target-language-

appropriate form in the target text (Dejean Le Féal 2008: 155; Pöchhacker 2016: 135; Vuorikoski 2004: 18). According to Vuorikoski (2004: 42), factors that complicate interpreting in the European Parliament and can increase susceptibility to errors include the written nature of speeches, complex syntax, high speech rates, prosodic features, creative or occasional metaphors, and atypical language use, legal terminology, high information density and complexity of source texts, frequent abbreviations, and (political) proper names (Pöchhacker 2016: 122–124; Vuorikoski 2004: 42, 183, 208, 236).

This study draws on two analyses of European Parliament interpreting that approach metaphor from different analytical perspectives. Vuorikoski (2004), focusing on interpreting quality, observes that metaphorical expressions – particularly less conventionalized ones – are often not fully preserved in simultaneous interpreting and emphasizes the primacy of meaning transfer under processing constraints. In contrast, Beaton (2007) examines the use of specific metaphors in interpreted discourse and links them to interpreters' individual degrees of ideologization. Her findings suggest that interpreters may strategically reproduce or select metaphors and that metaphor use should not automatically be categorized as an error.

While Vuorikoski highlights the challenges metaphors may pose in the simultaneous mode, Beaton foregrounds interpreters' agency and the ideological implications of metaphor choice. The two studies therefore differ less in opposition than in their analytical focus.

Taken together, the studies by Vuorikoski (2004) and Beaton (2007) illustrate both the challenges metaphor poses in simultaneous interpreting and the potential agency involved in metaphor selection. Building on these perspectives, the present study examines metaphor in interpreted political discourse in the European Parliament, drawing on a dual analytical framework that combines conceptual and traditional approaches (Lakoff/ Johnson 1980; Van den Broeck 1981).

Given that COVID-19 discourse is politically framed and characterized by recurring metaphorical patterns such as WAR, CRISIS, and MACHINE metaphors (Craig 2020; Escribano Hernández 2022), the European Parliament provides a particularly demanding context in which interpreters must process dense, metaphor-rich language under time pressure. By analyzing metaphor functions and their transfer in this setting, the study seeks to assess both interpreting performance and the potential reproduction or modification of ideological content.

6. Research questions

Having established the necessary theoretical foundation, the presentation of the research questions and methodological approach now marks the beginning of

the empirical, second part of this study. The methodological approach adopted here draws on Beaton's (2007: 285) examination of metaphor use in European Parliament interpreting, especially her interest in how metaphor choice may reflect interpretive decision-making and ideological positioning. They were formulated as follows: (1) How do interpreters in the European Parliament handle (political) metaphors? (1a) Does the metaphor in the source text fulfill the same function as the metaphor in the target text? (1b) Are metaphors omitted, demetaphorized, retained, intensified, or made more explicit during interpreting? Research question 1a investigates the functional consistency between the source text and the target text metaphor, addressing the qualitative level of analysis. Research question 1b aims to quantify interpreter behavior, assigning the handling of each source text metaphor to one of the five quantitative categories specified. The study does not aim to systematically compare degrees of conventionalization (e.g., innovative vs. highly conventionalized metaphors), as the analysis focuses on less conventionalized and contextually salient metaphors selected from the source text.

7. Methodology – data collection, corpus, transcript

A corpus analysis was conducted for this study. The *European Parliament Multimedia Centre* provided access to 15 explicitly Covid-19-related plenary debates between March and December 2020, the first year of the pandemic, in German and Spanish. These debates were transcribed, including the corresponding interpretation into the other language. The corpus consists of 142 speeches, 81 delivered in German and 61 in Spanish, along with their respective interpretations. Each speech is assigned a code composed of the debate date and the speech number. "a" at the end of the code denotes the source text, "b" the target text. For the present research interest, explained in more detail below, a rough or purely lexical/orthographic transcript was sufficient (Niemants 2012: 180).

The unidirectional analysis followed these steps: First, the source text is reviewed and a metaphor is identified. Metaphor identification was guided by principles similar to those underlying the Metaphor Identification Procedure (MIP) (Pragglejaz Group 2007), in that expressions were considered metaphorical when their contextual meaning contrasted with a more basic meaning but could be understood in comparison to it. However, a strict step-by-step MIP protocol was not applied, as the study did not aim at exhaustive metaphor identification across the corpus but focused on contextually salient and less conventionalized instances. The identified source text metaphor is analyzed according to its analytical relevance. When a metaphor reflects an underlying conceptual mapping that structures discourse, it is examined using the cognitive

framework of Lakoff and Johnson (1980). When the metaphor constitutes a conventionalized or culturally fixed expression (e.g. references to Greek mythology), the analysis focuses on its degree of conventionalization following Van den Broeck (1981). The two approaches therefore address different analytical dimensions rather than representing competing frameworks. Subsequently, one or more functions are assigned to the metaphor. The analysis then proceeds to the target text. The corresponding passage is identified and examined to determine whether the source text metaphor is retained, modified, demetaphorized, or omitted. If a metaphorical expression is present in the target text, it is categorized according to the cognitive or traditional framework outlined above and assigned one or more functions. Finally, the research questions are addressed: (1a) Is there functional consistency between the source and target text? (1b) Was the metaphor omitted, demetaphorized, retained, intensified, made more explicit? Although the research questions distinguish between qualitative (functional consistency) and quantitative (retention, omission, etc.) parameters, these dimensions are analytically interrelated, as will be discussed in the analysis section.

8. Analysis

The initial corpus contained several hundred metaphorical expressions, many of which were conventionalized or lexicalized. In a pilot analysis, the repeated examination of lexicalized expressions whose metaphorical origin is no longer salient proved analytically unproductive and was therefore not pursued further. For reasons of analytical feasibility and to allow for in-depth qualitative examination, the number was reduced to 64 cases. The selection was conducted exclusively on the basis of the source text; the treatment of these metaphors in the target text was not known at the time of selection. Consequently, the present study does not aim to systematically compare degrees of conventionalization but instead focuses on less conventionalized and contextually salient metaphors in order to examine their functional transfer in interpreting. While the research questions distinguish between qualitative (functional consistency) and quantitative (retention, omission, etc.) parameters, the analysis revealed that these dimensions are analytically interdependent. Demetaphorization means that, in contrast to omission, a corresponding target text segment could be clearly identified, but the metaphor from the source text was rendered without metaphorical content in the target text. Retention refers to instances in which the metaphorical nature of the source-text expression is maintained in the target text. However, retention is not automatically synonymous with successful interpreting, as its adequacy depends on whether the communicative function, conceptual domain, and pragmatic effect are preserved.

The category of intensification includes instances in which the metaphorical salience was increased, for example through the use of a more vivid or less conventional expression, the addition of metaphorical elements, or the activation of a more explicit source-domain mapping. Explicitation, by contrast, refers to cases in which metaphoricity was weakened, for instance through increased conventionalization, partial demetaphorization, or reduced imagery in the target text. The assessment of metaphorical salience was conducted qualitatively and comparatively, based on the relative degree of conventionalization and perceptible source-domain activation in the source and target texts. The metaphor functions outlined in the theoretical section (e.g., illustrative, persuasive/emotionalizing, structural, and ethos-related/self-representational functions) served as the basis for categorizing the metaphors in order to determine whether the respective communicative function was preserved in the target text. Table 1 presents the qualitative parameters vertically alongside with the quantitative analysis parameters arranged horizontally and shows clear, logical clustering. For instance, if no corresponding target text segment can be identified for a source text metaphor or the source text was demetaphorized, the question of functional consistency becomes obsolete. Conversely, if a target text metaphor is categorized as retained, it likely aligns with the qualitative

Table 1: Analytical framework for metaphor transfer in simultaneous interpreting

	Total		**Omitted**	**Demeta-phorized**	**Retained**	**Intensified**	**Made more explicit**	**Interpreting error**
Full functional consistency	**33**	German	–	–	13	–	4	2
		Spanish	–	–	10	–	4	–
		Total	**–**	**–**	**23**	**–**	**8**	**2**
Partial functional consistency	**3**	German	–	–	1	–	–	–
		Spanish	–	–	1	–	1	–
		Total	**–**	**–**	**2**	**–**	**1**	**–**
No functional consistency	**28**	German	6	6	–	1	–	–
		Spanish	7	8	–	–	–	–
		Total	**13**	**14**	**–**	**1**	**–**	**–**
Total	**64**		**13**	**14**	**25**	**1**	**9**	**2**

category of full functional consistency, as in fact was the case in 23 of 64 in-detail analyzed metaphors. The analysis is first presented from the perspective of functional consistency. The examples provided aim to illustrate the overlap described above; accordingly, for each qualitative analysis parameter, representative examples of the quantitative categories are discussed.

The question of functional consistency (1a) aims to determine whether the target text preserves not only the propositional content of the source text but also the communicative function of the metaphor, including its persuasive, illustrative, structural, or ethos-related effect within the discourse. Of the 64 metaphors analyzed in detail, 33 demonstrated full functional consistency, 28 showed no consistency, and 3 displayed partial consistency. The distribution was similar in both languages.

The metaphors classified under full functional consistency were very close renderings, mostly involving ontologization of the virus (Example 1), of history (Example 2), or of the EU member states, as well as metaphors with a similar degree of conventionalization. Example 1 consistently fulfilled the functions of ensuring coherence and emotionalization.

Table 2: Example 1

Source text (26.03.2020_7a)	**Target text (26.03.2020_7b)**
***[este virus]* habrá infectado letalmente nuestra democracia** y no nos lo podemos permitir	dass ***dieser Virus* nicht tödlich unsere Demokratie infiziert** das dürfen wir nicht zulassen
***[this virus]* will have lethally infected our democracy** and we cannot afford	that ***this virus* lethally infects our democracy** we must not allow that

Example 2 was also classified as consistently "emotionalizing," since the ontologization of history increases the pressure to act in a politically responsible manner.

Table 3: Example 2

Source text (26.03.2020_1a)	**Target text (26.03.2020_1b)**
die Geschichte schaut auf uns	***la historia*** nos está observando
history is looking at us	***history*** is watching us

Linguistic images that display similarities due to the described cultural and linguistic proximity are also found in the group of full functional consistency. Example 3 illustrates an occasional ontologizing metaphor in which the

interpreter adds the metalinguistic marker "sozusagen" ("so to speak"). While such markers can serve various pragmatic functions, including signaling figurative awareness or guiding interpretation, in this instance the addition reduces the immediacy and rhetorical force of the metaphor. Functional consistency is therefore maintained, yet on the quantitative level the case is categorized as "made more explicit," as the metaphorical framing is marked rather than directly enacted.

Table 4: Example 3

Source text (17.06.2020_35a)	**Target text (17.06.2020_35b)**
sector del transporte han sido los sectores **más castigados**	*Verkehr und Tourismus* sind vor der Pandemie **am meisten** sozusagen **bestraft** worden
the transport sector has been **the most punished** sector	*transport and tourism* were **punished** the most before the pandemic, so to speak

In Example 4, the improved, new version of the Schengen Area was expressed through the technical metaphor "2.0," which was retained thanks to the expression's international character.

Table 5: Example 4

Source text (18.06.2020_56a)	**Target text (18.06.2020_56b)**
fordern **Schengen 2.0**	piden un sistema **Schengen 2.0**
call for **Schengen 2.0**	call for a system **Schengen 2.0**

Partial functional consistency concerned 3 out of 64 metaphors analyzed in detail. Example 5 illustrates that although the target text metaphor was consistently categorized as "illustrative," the emotionalizing effect of the source text metaphor was lost due to the use of a technical metaphor.

Table 6: Example 5

Source text (21.10.2020_100a)	**Target text (21.10.2020_100b)**
Covid-19 ist ein **Brandbeschleuniger** der Armut	el covid 19 es un **catalizador** para el crecimiento de la pobreza
Covid-19 is a **(fire) accelerant** of poverty	Covid 19 is a **catalyst** for poverty growth

As previously indicated, when considering the overall speech (rate) and factoring in elements that determine interpreting at the European Parliament, one can surmise why metaphors are or were omitted or demetaphorized under certain conditions, thus falling into the category of "no functional consistency." For 13 out of the 28 metaphors in the "no functional consistency" category, no corresponding target text passage could be identified. They were therefore classified as "omitted" at the quantitative analysis level. Another subgroup comprises source text metaphors that apparently were not transferred into the target language because their primary function was to ensure coherence or cohesion. The interpreters therefore—often, presumably, due to the high speech rate and the information density of the speeches—prioritized conveying the gist of the original text.

In speech 26.03.2020_7a (Example 6), the economy is framed as a living organism. While this conceptual framing is conventional in political-economic discourse, the lexical realization "tejido sano" ("healthy tissue") represents a more marked and vivid instantiation of the organism metaphor. The interpreter omits this expression and instead opts for condensation and explicitation.

Table 7: Example 6

Source text (26.03.2020_7a)	**Target text (26.03.2020_7b)**
[tampoco tenemos vacunas para evitar la infección en nuestra economía pero sí que estamos a tiempo de aprobar medidas que permitan atenuar su efecto y] evitar que destruya **tejido sano** de nuestra economía [destruya empresas y empleos]	wir haben aber Impfstoffe gegen die Verheerungen die sozioökonomisch geschehen können wir müssen dafür sorgen, dass Arbeitsplätze bestehen bleiben und Unternehmen überleben
[we do not have vaccines to prevent infection in our economy either, but we do have time to adopt measures to mitigate the effect and] prevent it from destroying the **healthy tissue** of our economy [destroying companies and jobs].	but we have vaccines against the socio-economic devastation that can occur we must ensure that jobs remain and businesses survive

In Example 7 (p. 189), an instance of an occasional metaphor that was demetaphorized by the interpreter is presented.

Table 8: Example 7

Source text (26.03.2020_3a)	Target text (26.03.2020_3b)
tenemos que salir de esta **hibernación** económica y productiva	wir wollen dass die Wirtschaft produktiv bleiben kann
we have to get out of this economic and productive **hibernation**	we want the economy to remain productive

Examples 8 and 9 illustrate how linguistic differences can lead to demetaphorization. Example 8 features a metaphor commonly used in German to describe an EU (financial) stability mechanism. In Spanish institutional discourse, the metaphorical expression "Rettungsschirm" (rescue parachute) is often rendered in non-metaphorical terms such as "rescue fund" or "stability fund." This may explain why the demetaphorized interpretation in Example 8 is unsurprising, as the German "Rettungsschirm" is translated in the target text as a "large set of measures."

Table 9: Example 8

Source text (16.04.2020_22a)	Target text (16.04.2020_22b)
Rettungsschirm für Bürger für Unternehmen **gespannt**	gran cantidad de medidas tanto para los ciudadanos como para los Estados miembros
open a **rescue parachute** for citizens for companies	a large number of measures for citizens and Member States alike

In Example 9, the economy is conceptualized as a machine.

Table 10: Example 9

Source text (23.11.2020_124a)	Target text (23.11.2020_124b)
erste Schraube im Bankenbereich haben wir schon erfolgreich **festgezurrt**	nosotros eh ya hemos adoptado medidas
we have already successfully **tightened the first screw** in the banking sector	we have already taken measures

In 23 out of 25 target text instances where the metaphoricity of the source text was retained, full functional consistency was also achieved. Conversely, if a source text metaphor is omitted or demetaphorized in the target text, its

original function cannot be conveyed – this explains the clustering of quantitative categories within the qualitative description categories, a point that was already noted at the beginning of the previous chapter.

Only one of the 64 metaphors (Example 10) was categorized as "intensified." In this case, both the source and target texts draw on the domain of physics by referring to "forces." However, the term "Fliehkräfte" (centrifugal forces but more literally translated from German "fleeing forces") in the German source text seems to be used more literally and refers to forces fleeing from EU bureaucracy. This likely led the interpreter to opt not for the translation "fuerza centrífuga" which would have been theoretically correct, but rather to slightly intensify the meaning by rendering it as "rebellious forces." This results in a functional shift from illustration to an emotionally charged connotation of rebellion.

Table 11: Example 10

Source text (23.11.2020_125a)	**Target text (23.11.2020_125b)**
je mehr wir auf europäischer Ebene regeln desto stärker erfahren wir die **Fliehkräfte** einer nur noch mühsam zusammenhaltenden EU	cuanto más regulamos vemos que que hay muchas **fuerzas eh que que se rebelan**
the more we regulate at European level, the more we experience the **centrifugal forces** of an EU that is struggling to hold itself together	the more we regulate, the more we see that there are many **forces that are rebelling**

The category of explicitation represents a weakened form of retained metaphoricity. As shown in Example 3, this category typically includes metaphors that interpreters supplemented with explanatory additions.

A certain systematicity appears to underlie the combination of specific types of metaphor and particular quantitative analysis categories. For instance, the category of explicitation frequently includes occasional metaphors, while the omissions often involve metaphors that could clearly be classified as "coherence-preserving." Among the metaphors categorized as "retained," there is a notable presence of highly conventionalized or even lexicalized metaphors. Ontologizations, which can likewise be considered lexicalized and thus less metaphorical to some extent, were also often categorized as "retained."

9. Discussion and conclusion

The corpus confirms the prominence of established metaphorical framings identified in previous research, particularly WAR, DISASTER, and MACHINE metaphors (Craig 2020: 1026–1028; Escribano Hernández 2022: 22, 30; Pérez-Sobrino et al.

2022: 127–139). However, the primary contribution of this study lies not in identifying these frames, but in examining their functional transfer in simultaneous interpreting.

The analysis shows that while many metaphors were retained with full functional consistency, instances of demetaphorization, explicitation, and condensation also occurred. These shifts reveal how interpreters navigate metaphor-rich political discourse under processing constraints, occasionally modifying the rhetorical intensity or framing effect of the source text.

Professional guidelines and interpreter training programs (cf. Vuorikoski 2004: 18) generally emphasize the preservation of communicative intent and rhetorical effect in interpreting. From this perspective, successful transfer would ideally involve maintaining not only the function of a source-text metaphor but also its degree of metaphoricity. In the present corpus, this was observed in 23 out of 64 cases. In more than one third of the analyzed cases, the target text maintained both the communicative function and the metaphorical framing of the source text, and can therefore be regarded as functionally consistent. Vuorikoski (2004: 150) hypothesizes that metaphors in source texts may constitute a source of interpreting errors. The findings of the present study suggest a more differentiated picture. Although instances of omission and demetaphorization were observed, a substantial proportion of metaphors were rendered with functional consistency. Rather than systematically leading to errors – depending, of course, on how "error" is defined – the analysis indicates a discernible tendency among interpreters to preserve metaphorical framing by using metaphorical expressions in the target language whenever possible.

The question of why 41 out of the 64 metaphors analyzed in detail could not be categorized as "retained" while preserving full functional consistency, and were handled differently by interpreters, is highly complex and cannot be definitively answered. Only the factors discussed in the first part—which likely influenced the interpreters' decisions—can be identified. The interpreting situation, characterized generally by the ephemeral nature of source texts and the simultaneity of multiple psycholinguistic processes, combined with factors that further complicate interpreting in the European Parliament, directly impacts interpreter behavior. High speech rates, the high degree of scriptedness of speeches, high information density, the resulting complexity of source speeches, EU jargon, etc., all apply to the speeches analyzed here. For this reason, it might be interesting to compare the corpus analyzed for this study with another corpus examining speeches in a different simultaneous interpreting setting. Another way to explore interpreters' motivations could involve a research design that combines corpus analysis with interviews or a questionnaire study.

During the first year of the pandemic, another factor that potentially made interpreting in the European Parliament more difficult was the remote

participation of some speakers via streaming. It is unclear from the Multimedia Centre whether the same number of interpreters and languages was available during lockdowns, whether interpreters were on-site or also had to rely on remote solutions, and when and how often relay interpreting was used—factors that would be worth incorporating into future similar analyses.

The linguistic differences between German and Spanish that were discussed could be partially observed in the analyzed corpus. One key factor seems to be the differing degrees of metaphor conventionalization in each language. However, it was also observed that metaphors with a similar degree of conventionalization in both languages were sometimes still demetaphorized or omitted. Thus, conventionalization appears to be only one of many influencing factors. What became apparent, however, is that certain similarities between metaphors seem to affect the interpreting strategies chosen by interpreters. The correlation between metaphor types and the way they were handled was hinted at the end of the quantitative analysis. To confirm this, further research projects that systematically examine this correlation would be necessary. This study was able to confirm that interpreters seem, for example, to favor explicitation—often in the form of explanatory or attenuating insertions like "so to speak"— when dealing with creative, occasional metaphors, and tend toward omission when handling coherence-preserving metaphors. This could again be related to time constraints or to Vuorikoski's (2004: 153) postulated primacy of conveying the essential message. Regarding linguistic differences between German and Spanish, the German-specific phenomenon of recursion—which lends itself well to ad hoc metaphors like "Rettungsschirm" (rescue parachute)—could be a factor. Compound nouns in general pose a challenge for interpreting into Spanish.

Nevertheless, the findings of the corpus analysis conducted for this work do not support Vuorikoski's (2004: 172, 183, 234) claim that metaphors are generally unsuitable for the simultaneous interpreting mode, since otherwise, demetaphorization would have had to occur far more frequently.

As mentioned, 33 of the 64 metaphors showed full functional consistency, while 28 did not. One reason for this balanced result likely lies in the limited distinctiveness between functions, as metaphors almost inherently serve to illustrate—to make something conceptually graspable through language. Nevertheless, more target text metaphors were found to exhibit full functional consistency with their corresponding source text metaphors, allowing the first research question to be answered in the affirmative.

The second research question, concerning the quantitative dimension of the analysis conducted for this study, has been partially answered. One third of the metaphors were retained—either through equivalent metaphors resulting from a similar degree of lexicalization in both languages or through a different metaphor. Roughly one third of the analyzed metaphors were classified as

either "omitted" or "demetaphorized." Nine metaphors were explicated, for the previously discussed potential reasons, and one metaphor was intensified. The fact that more metaphors were not intensified suggests a heightened awareness among interpreters to refrain from interfering with the source text, which aligns with the quality standards set by professional associations and universities.

Demetaphorization, however, does not appear to be perceived by interpreters as a particularly invasive alteration, as conveying the gist of the source text is considered the minimal requirement for a successful interpretation. This could also be attributed to a sense of responsibility toward the target audience. Interpreters, in this sense, aim to ensure that the interpretation is understood, and consciously reduce the (metaphorical) complexity of the source text. Even in the case of omissions, it was shown that these are not to be seen per se as errors but rather, at most, as discontinuities in the transmission of the aesthetic content of the source text. Therefore, none of the analyzed examples can be classified as failed interpretations.

In conclusion, while the results provide meaningful insights into the functional transfer of metaphors in simultaneous interpreting, further refinement of functional and typological distinctions would enhance analytical precision. Moreover, the cognitive and strategic decision-making processes of interpreters in the booth remain beyond the scope of the present corpus-based analysis and would benefit from complementary methodological approaches, such as interviews, think-aloud protocols, or experimental designs.

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