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## A Cognitive Approach to Translating Phraseological Terms

### **Abstract.**

Translation of phraseological terms is a new area of research both in the theory of phraseology and translation studies. It calls for comprehension of the basic tenets of phraseology, including figurative meaning as a categorial feature, and comprehension of metaphorical conceptualisation: the relationship between metaphor and thought, the role of metaphor in science, and the function of figurative language in terminology. Most phraseological terms are metaphorical. In the cognitive stylistic view, they are theory constitutive metaphors, an integral part of both scientific theory and the respective term; hence, the importance of preserving metaphor in the target language wherever possible. A cognitive approach to phraseological terms is a tool to recognise metaphor as a technique of abstract reasoning in the formation of terminology. Its translation is not merely part of cross-cultural communication; it is a cognitive operation of the mind. Translation of phraseological terms reveals the role of cognitive theory in translation practice.

**Key words:** *phraseological unit, metaphorical term, recognisability, memorability, back translation*

### **1. Introduction: phraseological terms**

Translation of phraseological units (PUs) and their stylistic properties has been in the focus of research interest for several decades, drawing on various languages, genres and periods, for instance, Shadrin 1969; Gläser 1984, 1987; Veisbergs 1997, 2006; Chamizo Domínguez 1999, 2002; Oncins 2005; Fiedler 2007; Nuryeva 2007, to mention but a few.

Translation of phraseological terms (or terminological phraseological units<sup>1</sup>) is a new area of research both in the theory of phraseology (Gläser

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<sup>1</sup> *Phraseological terms* and *terminological phraseological units* are used interchangeably in this article.

1995; Naciscione 2003, 2006; Nikulina 2005) and translation studies. It calls for comprehension of the basic tenets of phraseology, including understanding figurative meaning of PUs as a categorial feature.<sup>2</sup> Essentially, it also calls for metaphorical competence and recognition of PUs (see Pamies and Potapova 2005). On the other hand, translation requires understanding of cognitive linguistic processes in the formation of figurative terminology. Thus, translation of phraseological terms is interdisciplinary *per se* as it stands on the fringe of phraseology, terminology and cognitive linguistics.

The issue of translation of phraseological terms is even more topical in the new millennium, with novel terms, many of them metaphorical, springing up in all spheres of human activity. The simple fact is that metaphors abound in science. They are borrowed globally across languages and cultures together with new theory, and they all need to be translated as they concern the latest developments in all domains, for instance, economic issues (*black swan*, *toxic assets*, *credit crunch*, *shell bank*, *bank run*, *green shoots*, *pattern mining*, *debt-for-nature swap*, *dark pools*); EU policies (*sunset clause*, *grandfather clause*, *standstill clause*, *health check*, *gold plating*); the environment (*environmental footprint*, *emissions trading*, *carbon capture*, *green growth*) astronomy (*black hole*, *white dwarf*, *red giant*, *dark flow*, *Big Bang*); PR (*spin doctor*); IT developments (*orphaned article*, *walled garden*, *cold start*, *flash mob*, *vampire power*, *cloud computing*). All these are important metaphorical concepts, and hence important metaphorical terms.<sup>3</sup> Hundreds of new terms emerge in EU documents every month. Many of them are figurative, and they all need to be translated into the remaining 22 languages of the EU and eventually transposed into the national legislation of Member States.

## 2. Translation of figurative terminology: a theoretical framework

### 2.1. A cognitive approach

Figurative language in general and metaphor as its most powerful pattern in particular, is a challenging area in translation. However, the issue of translating metaphorical terms is even more complicated as it is directly link-

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<sup>2</sup> I believe that the phraseological unit is a stable, cohesive combination of words with a fully or partially figurative meaning. For my understanding of PUs and their stylistic potential, see Naciscione 2010: 17–28, 31–43.

<sup>3</sup> There also exist many terms based on metonymic mapping or on the interplay of metaphor and metonymy, e.g. *clean hands*, which is a metonymic term or a metaphorical metonymy, to be more precise. However, translation of metonymic terms is outside the scope of this article.

ed with one of the basic questions in cognitive linguistics: the relationship between metaphor and thought, the role of metaphor in science, and the function of figurative language in terminology. This leads to the issue of the right of metaphor to be preserved in translation of metaphorical terms into another language. A cognitive insight reveals the importance of metaphorical conceptualisation in terminology<sup>4</sup> and the need to preserve metaphor in translation wherever possible. Translation of figurative terminology is a field that displays differences in the approach to figurative use across cultures and languages.

My approach to issues of translating figurative terminology is based on the findings of cognitive linguistics about the significance of metaphor in thought and language, and my own translation and interpreting experience. Metaphor has been recognised as a basic technique of reasoning that is also manifest in terminology, which is an important area of meaning construction.<sup>5</sup> Replacing a metaphorical term results in a different, non-metaphorical conceptualisation. It is not justified as it severs associations, inhibits perception and recognition of the term and hence hinders its back translation and interpreting.

## 2.2. Theory constitutive metaphors

A cognitive perspective helps us to understand the significance of abstract thought<sup>6</sup> and abstract reasoning in the formation of figurative terminology, which brings out the relevance of cognitive theory in translation practice. Figurative terms form part of the conceptual system of a language. In the cognitive linguistic view, metaphorical terms are central to scientific thought as they are theory constitutive metaphors. (Boyd [1979] 1998; Kuhn [1979] 1998; Hoffman 1980; Gibbs [1994] 1999). Metaphorical conceptualisation plays a constitutive role in framing ideas and denoting abstract entities in science. As Gibbs points out, theory constitutive metaphors are indispensable parts of scientific theory. ([1994] 1999: 172) The cognitive significance of metaphor in language, including terminology, cannot be overestimated.

For instance, the term *green policy* does not simply mean ecological policy, environmental policy, or environmentally-friendly policy. The metaphor

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<sup>4</sup> For metaphorical conceptualisation in terms, see Meyer et al. 1997; Vandaele 2002.

<sup>5</sup> For the notion of meaning construction, see Gibbs 2003, 2007; Panther 2005.

<sup>6</sup> For the central role of metaphor in abstract thought, see Lakoff and Johnson [1980] 2003: 245–247.

conveys a new concept that reflects a change in policy to provide for sustainable development.<sup>7</sup> *Green growth*, a metaphorical term used in EU documents when discussing agriculture, is understood as follows: “Integrated rural development, additional climate measures, green energy, R&D, innovation, modernisation, training, green jobs, young farmers, quality policy”. This explication is given in the “Report on the Future of the Common Agriculture Policy after 2013” (2010: 15). Thus, the term is brief and precise while the definition specifies what it signifies.

In sum, a theory constitutive metaphor forms an integral part of both a scientific theory and the respective term; hence, the importance of preserving metaphor in the TL. However, even recent advanced studies of translation pay little or no attention to the translation of metaphor (see Roberts 2002: 429–442; Hatim and Munday 2004; Grabe 2002; Cao [2007] 2009; Gambier and van Doorslaer 2010), nor does research on interpreting. (see Schweda Nicholson 2002: 443–456)

### 3. Trends in translation of phraseological terms

Differences in figurative use largely depend on language traditions, attitudes and theoretical assumptions. One indicator is the recognition of metaphor as a legitimate tool of expressing abstract thought. Cognitive linguists believe that recognition of figurative use is of paramount importance for the understanding of metaphor in thought, language and culture. (Kövecses 2006) In many countries, linguists usually have no problems with recognising metaphor in literary discourse, especially poetry and folk songs. However, difficulties arise with recognition of metaphor in scientific discourse, specialist terminology and its translation. Failure to recognise metaphor reveals the theoretical reasons that lie behind it.

It is frequently believed that in non-literary texts there is unlikely to be any reason to replace metaphors in translation, so the risk of omitting or losing an important metaphor is negligible. (see Boase-Beier 2006: 100) However, in practice loss of metaphor is much too common. Moreover, it is practised with full awareness, backed by theoretical assumptions. A great variety of approaches exist, despite achievements in cognitive linguistics: metaphor in scientific texts is no longer seen as a deviation but has been recognised as a constitutive part of scientific thinking. It follows that trans-

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<sup>7</sup> For examples of translation of the metaphor *green*, see Subsection 3.5. of this paper.

lation of phraseological terms forms part of a broader cognitive issue, that of figurative meaning construction.<sup>8</sup>

### 3.1. Existing approaches

There are four major sources of translation of terminology into Latvian<sup>9</sup> which frequently each give a different translation. Apart from that, research centres or ministries publish, using their own translations of terms, especially if an official translation has not been approved for a longer time. To make things more complicated, translations of a term in EU bodies may differ from translations of the same term in Latvia.

Translation and interpreting practice in the EU reveals a variety of approaches in dealing with phraseological terms, each indicating a different understanding of the relationship between the metaphorical concept and the term. Results vary.

- Metaphorical loan translation (e.g. in information technology); this means that the theory is borrowed together with the metaphorical term.
- Replacement by another metaphor (e.g. in information technology).
- Demetaphorisation of the term (common in Latvian, Italian<sup>10</sup>), resulting in a descriptive, oblique nonmetaphorical translation.
- Variants: two or several translations functioning at the same time.
- Replacement by a definition.
- Placing in inverted commas (common in Latvian, Spanish, Portuguese).
- A translation void, that is, the term remains untranslated, e.g. no translation has been offered for *toxic assets* in Latvian so far by IATE since 2007 when the term gained popularity.
- Long delay (common in Latvian). This means that no official translation is offered for several years. Clearly, terminologists are unable to accept a metaphorical loan translation and even find it difficult to give a descriptive translation of a phenomenon. For instance, *credit crunch* had no approved translation in Latvian for several years. Language users

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<sup>8</sup> For figurative meaning construction and the role of conceptual mapping, see Gibbs 2007; Radden, Köpcke, Berg and Siemund 2007.

<sup>9</sup> IATE – InterActive Terminology for Europe, the terminology database for the European Union. IATE is an online dictionary for European Union terminology in all the official EU languages. *AkadTerm* is an academic terminology database of the Terminology Commission of the Latvian Academy of Sciences; the terms have been officially approved. *VVC* – a free internet terminology database of the National Language Centre; it gives specialist terms which have been officially approved. *Tilde* – a specialist computer dictionary.

<sup>10</sup> For the trend to paraphrase terminological metaphors in Italian, see Luminița (2003: 328–329).

got by, resorting to “a financial crisis” or “a credit crisis” instead. In 2010 a demetaphorised translation was offered by IATE: LV *kredītresursu trūkums* (a deficit of credit resources). Cf.: IT *erosione del credito* (replacement by another metaphor); DE *Kreditklemme* (replacement by another metaphor); ES *crisis del crédito* (demetaphorisation); LT *kreditamivo sąlygų sugriežtinimas* (periphrasis: “stricter conditions for receiving credit”).

- Regular, repeated replacement (common in Latvian). The translation is constantly replaced in successive documents in search of a better version of the term over years, for instance, “a framework directive” has had five successive translations in Latvian since it appeared in the first part of the 90s (see Subsection 3.4. of this paper).

From now on I will only deal with some of the most common failures to appreciate metaphor in the translation of phraseological terms.

### 3.2. Demetaphorisation of a metaphorical term in translation

The semantic and stylistic complexity of a metaphorical term presents objective difficulties. This is true of any language. It is also true that metaphors exist which do not always translate cross-culturally very well. (Vandale 2002) Apart from that, there are specific circumstances, which may differ from country to country. In Latvia, for instance, translation of terminology is a new area, actually as old as the country’s regained independence, that is, about 20 years. Moreover, translation always depends on the theoretical tenets of the translator or the terminologist. Experience has it that translating metaphorical terminology into Latvian has proved to be especially difficult due to the theoretical approach, namely, a conventional understanding of terminology, which fails to account for metaphors in terms. This stems from the linguistic tradition of prescriptivism in Latvia, still lingering on from the 19th century, and the long-standing belief in Latvian linguistics that metaphor is inappropriate in scientific language, including terms. This is clearly seen in the demetaphorisation of terms in loan translation in the Latvian language. In the traditional view, terms are considered to be non-figurative, monosemous and stylistically neutral. (Lingvisticheskiy Entsiklopecheskiy Slovar’ [1990] 2002; Rozenbergs 2004: 184) None of this is true today; it is an obsolete belief. However, this approach persists. Actual translation practice shows that many Latvian translators and terminologists have objections to metaphorical terms, which results in demetaphorisation, that is, loss of metaphor in translated terminology. This causes concern and difficulties in translation and interpreting practice.

Demetaphorisation of figurative terms in translation may be explained

by misguided goodwill to keep the Latvian language pure and clear, and, at a theoretical level, by a failure to recognise figurative language as a regular feature of the workings of the human mind in abstract reasoning. This is a deliberate attempt to avoid metaphor in translation by replacing it by a non-figurative word or words in an effort to “ameliorate” the metaphorical term. As a result of demetaphorisation, the image and the associative links are lost, encumbering retrieval of the original form of the SL and hence back translation and interpreting. The question remains why preference is given to non-metaphorical translation and why it is considered to be better language.

One of the metaphorical terms frequently used in the EU since 2007 has been a *health check*, meaning a health check of the CAP (the EU Common Agricultural Policy). On 20 November, 2007 the European Commission adopted *The Communication on the CAP Health Check* (2007), which examines the possibility of further policy adjustments. The metaphorical term *health check of the CAP* has been used ever since. When comparing the translation of this term into the rest of the 22 languages of the EU, we can observe a variety of approaches (see “Report on the Future of the Common Agriculture Policy after 2013” (2010)):

- 1) the metaphor has been preserved, e.g. FR *le bilan de santé*; DE *Gesundheitscheck der GAP*; IT *valutazione dello stato di salute della PAC*;
- 2) the term has been put in inverted commas, e.g. PT “*Exame de Saúde*” da PAC; ES el “*chequeo*” de la PAC;
- 3) loss of metaphor, demetaphorisation, e.g. PL *ocena funkcjonowania WPR*; BG *преглед на състоянието на ОСП*;
- 4) several translations, e.g. in Latvian:
  - a) loss of metaphor: *KLP pārskatīšana* (review / revision / re-examination of the CAP);
  - b) use of inverted commas for the metaphor: *KLP “veselības pārbaude”*.

I would argue that the loss of metaphor is unjustified, as the health metaphor is used to structure an economic policy. The image is essential for comprehension of the term. The general properties of health and illness frequently constitute metaphorical source domains due to the obvious connection between bodily experience and abstract reasoning. (see Boers 1999: 49–55; Kövecses 2002: 16–17). Gibbs argues that “people’s subjective, felt experiences of their bodies in action provide part of the fundamental grounding for language and thought”. (2006: 9)

Let us turn to another phraseological term: *money laundering*.<sup>11</sup> This is

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<sup>11</sup> For more on translation of the metaphorical PU *money laundering*, see Naciscione 2003, 2006.

an important metaphorical concept in criminal law. It has been in regular use in legal texts for four decades. Metaphor is a salient feature in this term as it perfectly conveys what takes place – illegal, or dirty, money is put through a cycle of transactions, or washed, so that it comes out the other end as legal, or clean, money. The metaphorical loan translation has been accepted as the official term internationally, including the EU Member States. Cf.: FR *blanchiment de capitaux*; DE *Geldwasche*; SV *penningtvätt*; DA *pengevask*; NO *hvitvasking av penger*; ES *blanqueo de dinero*; PL *pranie pieniędzy*; ET *rahapesu*; HU *pénzmosás*; CS *praní špinavých peněz*; LT *pinigų plovimas*; NL *witwassen van geld*; SL *pranje denarja* etc.

In Latvian this legal term was translated by a definition in 1991: LV *nelikumīgi iegūtu līdzekļu legalizācija* (legalisation of proceeds of illicit gains) to be replaced by *noziedzīgi iegūtu līdzekļu legalizācija* (legalisation of criminally gained proceeds) in 2005 (see Subsection 3.4. of this paper). All this is instead of *naudas atmazgāšana* (money laundering), which is a metaphorical loan and which is brief, clear and precise in contrast to the explanatory translation. It is also perfectly acceptable from the point of view of euphony in Latvian. It is true that it is informal and it is a metaphor but so is the metaphorical term in the SL. A definition instead of a metaphor is a case of misguided creativity; it is actually a semantic and stylistic mismatch.

Demetaphorisation is a hindrance in the acquisition and use of a term. Moreover, replacement of a metaphorical term by a definition is not only extremely cumbersome, it is dysfunctional in practice. The metaphorical term easily lends itself to derivation and compounding because it is concise. A definition or an oblique periphrasis is not flexible in text, and the translation of the term creates serious syntactic and stylistic problems, e.g. such phrases as *to launder money*, *laundering techniques*, *an anti-laundering campaign*, present almost insurmountable difficulties for translators and interpreters (especially in simultaneous interpreting). The media often ignore the prescribed lengthy translation. Legal professionals and people at large use the metaphorical loan translation in their daily practice while in written language and in official situations they are obliged to use the approved definition. A term is not created only to appear in legal texts but will invariably be used much more widely: in spoken language, media texts, the Internet.

In Latvian metaphor, replacement by a literal word combination emerges as a regular pattern in the translation of metaphorical terms. When the term is freshly borrowed, it still has a metaphorical equivalent. When it gets to the stage of approval, the metaphor is lost. If an adequate metaphorical loan translation is possible, the term should not be weeded out: it should not



be replaced by a definition, a periphrasis or a description, nor should it be placed in inverted commas.

### 3.3. Use of inverted commas for phraseological terms

One feature in metaphorical representations that strikes the eye in the Latvian media is the use of inverted commas for both lexical and phraseological metaphors. It is a linguistic tradition which reveals some socio-cultural attitudes and theoretical assumptions. Inverted commas for the term *money laundering* keep appearing in Latvian media texts: either both words (“*naudas atmazgāšana*”) or the metaphor alone (*naudas “atmazgāšana”*) is frequently used in inverted commas.

In linguistics, it is generally believed that inverted commas are used when there is a sense of uncertainty whether a word or a phrase may be completely accurate or suitable or whether it is quite a proper choice. However, this is not the case. The reason is completely different. In this example, the use of inverted commas reveals unsubstantiated fear that the reader may fail to perceive and comprehend the figurative meaning; it means failure to accept the metaphor. Use of inverted commas for metaphors reflects a different way of thinking that is prescribed by *Valodniecības pamatterminu skaidrojošā vārdnīca* (Explanatory Dictionary of Basic Terms in Linguistics), which defines inverted commas as follows, “Inverted commas indicate words which are used in a figurative meaning and which are stylistically unfit”.<sup>12</sup> (Skujiņa 2007: 293) This theoretical stance has practical consequences. The requirement is enforced; it is strictly followed in schools, and journalists have to comply with it, though metaphorical use is perfectly clear without inverted commas. Thus, it is a broader question of the theoretical school of thought. The use of inverted commas for metaphors is a pattern of thought and perception that can be traced back to the prescriptive approach. It is clear that a cognitive approach is necessary both to create and to interpret a metaphor. Recognition of metaphor is a cognitive ability; hence we may expect the reader to possess some cognitive skills and ability to recognise and identify a metaphor without inverted commas.

### 3.4. Successive replacement of translation

In striving for a better translation in Latvian, new official variants are introduced for the same term as time goes by. This has been an interesting de-

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<sup>12</sup> Translated by the author – A.N.

velopment over the last two decades. For instance, when the term *a framework directive* first appeared it was translated as 1) *jumta direktīva* (an umbrella directive), which is a metaphorical replacement, emphasising the encompassing role of the directive. Then other variants followed: 2) *struktūrdirektīva* (a structural directive); 3) *ietvardirektīva*; 4) *satvardirektīva*; the latter two translations underscore the framing role of the directive; 5) *pamatdirektīva* (a basic directive), seen as a basis for national legislation. For the time being this seems to be the final variant. This approach may be seen as a good way to brush up the translator's or the interpreter's memory and the ability to follow the latest changes in translation of terminology.

### 3.5. Cross-linguistic diversity in approach

Linguistic diversity in the EU has resulted in variegated approaches to translation, including translation of figurative terminology. One of the challenges is that there is no cross-linguistic uniformity in translation of the same term, for instance, the metaphor *green*. This has acquired a range of translation variants in the EU languages, although it is widely used as a metaphorical constituent in a number of PUs and set expressions. In "Report on the Future of the Common Agricultural Policy after 2013", one section is entitled "A greener CAP" (2010: 10). Comparison of the document in all EU languages reveals strikingly differing approaches:

- the metaphor *green* is preserved,  
e.g. DA *En grønnere fælles landbrugspolitik*; IT *Una PAC piú verde*; FR *Une PAC plus verte*; SL *Bolj zelena SKP*; PT *Uma PAC mais verde*; NL *Een groener GLB*;
- the metaphor *green* is replaced by the non-metaphorical term "ecological",  
e.g. RO *O PAC mai ecologică*; ES *Una PAC más ecológica*; LT *Ekologiškesnė BŽŪP*; PL *Bardziej ekologiczna WPR*;
- the metaphor *green* is replaced by a descriptive phrase, avoiding the original metaphor *green*,  
e.g. HU *Környezetbarátabb KAP*; SV *En mer miljövänlig gemensam jordbrukspolitik*; ET *keskkonnasõbralikum ÜPP*; all three languages have replaced the metaphor by "A more environmentally-friendly CAP".

However, Latvian offers a different variant: LV *Videi saudzīgāka KLP*. *Videi saudzīgs* does not lend itself to translation back into English very well. The literal translation could be "more caring for the environment" (LV *saudzīgs* – EN *careful*, with *care*), a more distant translation could be "environmentally-friendly" or "environmentally sound". The two latter trans-

lations may sound more scientific but they have a different meaning from *green* or “caring” or in other words, a different conceptualisation. Moreover, the metaphorical term *green* is theory constitutive, it is a specific instance of figurative meaning construction. It is a new approach in management of the environment. This is very well seen from the explication of the new phraseological term *green growth*, given on p. 20 of the same document: “Integrated rural development, additional climate measures, green energy, R&D, innovation, modernisation, training, green jobs, young farmers, quality policy” (LV *videi saudzīga izaugsme*).

- The metaphor *green* is used; however, it is put in inverted commas in the text.

Moreover, there is no consistency in translations of the European Parliament in the same language, for example,

- 1) in the Spanish text two paragraphs contain three translations used for *green* (§ 41, § 42, p. 11):
  - a) a greener CAP – Una PAC más ecológica (replacement by a nonmetaphorical term);
  - b) green growth – crecimiento “verde” (metaphor in inverted commas);
  - c) green jobs – empleo verde (metaphor);
- 2) in Bulgarian – all three variants appear in the text.
- 3) in German:
  - a) a greener CAP – eine ökologischer GAP (replacement by a nonmetaphorical term)
  - b) green growth – “grünes” Wachstum (metaphor in inverted commas)

Thus, the concept *green* has acquired different translations, resulting in lack of consistency.

Interestingly, the European Commission has introduced a new award scheme, the “European Green Capital Award” to promote green management in EU capital cities. (2009 Environment Policy Review, 2010: 16) One wonders how Latvian terminologists are going to translate the award if *green* should be translated as *videi saudzīgs* (careful about the environment, that is, environmentally-friendly). Any attempt at a descriptive translation would be a semantic and stylistic loss. Metaphor is a powerful tool in theory constitutive terms in the SL. If an adequate metaphorical translation is achieved, it continues to serve this function in the TL. A term must be concise and flexible, that is, easy to use in different contexts. A comparison of these approaches brings out the role of linguistic theory in translation practice.

#### 4. Translation of new EU metaphorical terminology into Latvian: main issues and tendencies

The trend to demetaphorise metaphorical terms is clearly seen if we have a closer look at translation of new metaphorical terms used in EU institutions (the European Commission, the European Parliament) in a number of European languages. Importantly, loss of metaphor in the official Latvian translation occurs despite the fact that a metaphorical loan translation would not compromise comprehension or euphony, for instance:

EN a grandfather clause – LV *esošo tiesību saglabāšanas klauzula* (a clause to preserve existing rights);

EN a ceiling price – LV *maksimālā cena* (the maximum price);

EN zero tolerance – LV *absolūta neiecietība* (absolute intolerance);

EN orphan land – LV *zeme bez īpašnieka* (land without an owner);

EN a sunset clause – LV *noslēguma klauzula; turpināmība* (the closing clause; continuity).

Demetaphorisation also appears in conventional metaphorical terms used in day-to-day work in the European Parliament. The issue becomes more apparent if we compare several languages, e.g. EN a key vote – LV *izšķirošs balsojums* (a decisive vote). Cf.: FR *vote clé*; DE *Schlüsselabstimmung*. Metaphor is a natural phenomenon in terms as it reflects the quintessence of the thought process; thus, it should not be done away with in translation. In practice this means that the metaphor is lost, no associations are left and the rule of back translation has been violated (see Section 5 of this paper).

At the appearance of a new metaphorical term, each language struggles in its own way, frequently ending up with a figurative translation, either a loan translation or replacement by another metaphor. As the above examples have shown, a number of Member States go against metaphor in translation of a new term. Differences emerge in the chosen path. In Latvian, in many terms the metaphorical loan is used in the initial stage, but then is usually replaced by a non-metaphorical translation which may have distant associations with the original or no associations at all. Then the stage of several successive translations usually sets in, in the search for a better way. Absence of metaphor leads to a variety of nonmetaphorical translations. I would like to illustrate the tortuous process of translating *money laundering* into Latvian. The term came to the fore in Latvia with the adoption of “Council Directive 91/308/EEC of 10 June 1991 on prevention of the use of the financial system for the purpose of money laundering”. The text of the directive was duly translated. At first the term “money laundering” was replaced by a definition *nelikumīgi iegūtu līdzekļu legalizācija* (legalisation of illicitly gained proceeds),

and used in the title of the law. However, as the English text of the directive contains several derivatives and compounds with “launder” (e.g. a launderer, a money-laundering operation), the translator has found it difficult to use the cumbersome nonmetaphorical term on all occasions in the text. As a result, no single term is used throughout the text; instead there are five variants: 1) the definition *nelikumīgi iegūtu līdzekļu legalizācija* in the title, 2) the definition with the metaphorical term *naudas atmazgāšana* (money laundering) in brackets when it is first mentioned in the text, 3) *naudas atmazgāšana* (money laundering) used in cases of compounding and derivation, 4) “*naudas atmazgāšana*” (money laundering) – inverted commas used for the whole term, 5) only “*atmazgāšana*” (laundering) appears in inverted commas. This means obvious absence of uniformity. In 1997 the Latvian Law on money laundering was adopted with *Nelikumīgi iegūtu līdzekļu legalizācija* in the title. *Naudas atmazgāšana* appears only once in the first paragraph in brackets after the translated term. However, the EU Directive of 2005 that was transposed into Latvian legislation in 2008 contains two changes: a) no *money laundering* is mentioned throughout the text of the Latvian Law, and a new version of the translation appears: *noziedzīgi iegūtu līdzekļu legalizācija* (legalisation of criminally gained proceeds). As a consequence, translators and interpreters have to keep following all the changes instead of using an established term for an established concept. Thus the present translation of the term *money laundering* still remains “legalisation of criminally gained proceeds”.

Surprisingly, new Latvian translations also emerge for terms which have been used in EU documents for years, e.g. EN a pilot project – LV *izmēģinājuma projekts* (a test project) instead of the common existing metaphorical LV *pilotprojekts* (a pilot project). (*Transporta un tūrisma komitejas atzinums* 2010: 6)

A number of terms get no translation (a translation void) in Latvian for several years, sometimes only a description, e.g. *gold-plating* – the practice of national bodies of exceeding the terms of EU directives when transposing them into national law, which is due to reluctance to use a metaphorical loan. With the present theoretical approach, terms like *toxic assets*, *dark pools*, which have been in current use due to the financial crisis, have no hope of gaining a metaphorical equivalent in Latvian. For the time being the available terminological dictionaries give the reply “no match is found”.

A metaphorical term is not an impermissible deviation, nor is it an embellishment, so that there is no reason to avoid it. Retention of the SL metaphor is essential in all cases when it is possible. An oblique demetaphorised phrase instead of a metaphorical loan translation is a pointless impediment in translation and interpreting practice.

## 5. Basic Principles in Translation of Metaphorical Terms

Each new metaphorical term is the result of figurative meaning construction, as is its translation into the TL. However, this is frequently overlooked in practice, the same as some basic principles of psychology. First and foremost, it is recognisability. In metaphor, the pattern of figurative meaning is based on similarity that helps to identify the term in translation and interpreting. Hence the role of cognitive association formation in human memory. The ability to recognise is known as recognition memory in cognitive psychology and neuroscience. Loss of metaphor in the TL inhibits associations. Nonmetaphorical translation is often beyond recognition.

The replacement of metaphor fails to meet the essential requirement of recognisability, which helps to retrieve the loan from long-term memory by associative links. A definition or an oblique periphrastic description severs associations and impedes back translation. The approved Latvian translation *noziedzīgi iegūtu līdzekļu legalizācija* is a hurdle, to say the least.

Second, memorability implies the state of being easy to remember, the quality of being memorable in consciousness. Psycholinguistic research suggests that PUs are stored and processed in the brain as individual units. The phraseological image plays an essential role in memorisation. Human associative memory helps to establish an immediate link between the two terms, especially if the image is striking. "The memorisation process favours salient meanings" (Philip 2006: 8). The value of memorability is especially clearly seen in simultaneous interpreting when the term must be on the tip of the tongue, and it is the associations that are at work. Psychologically, continuous change results in lack of memorability that is an essential distinguishing attribute of a figurative term. The image of the phraseological term makes recall of the unit not only much easier but also more precise. As Boers (2000) points out, it is metaphoricity that makes learning and retention more effective.

Third, back translation.<sup>13</sup> The attempt to avoid metaphor results in demetaphorisation and lengthy descriptive translations. Importantly, it encumbers back translation. In all these cases the terminologist has completely forgotten about the daily need for back translation. I would argue that the process of translation or interpretation is not a one-way street. Unfortunately, the back-again pathway of the process has been largely neglected in translation

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<sup>13</sup> By back translation I do not mean a word-for-word translation of a target text (Palumbo 2009: 14) but the natural process of, for instance, EN → LV → EN, in interpreting or in translation of EU legal documentation, accounting for work performed.

of metaphorical terms in Latvian. In many cases the TL variant does not even distantly suggest the term used in the SL although the language resources are available. As a result the translated terms do not easily lend themselves to back translation. The trend has been an ongoing process.

All three are important principles, as all EU directives are transposed into national legislation which is drafted in the language of the Member State, which, in its turn, needs to be translated back into English again to make cross-language communication possible, first and foremost with Brussels. Terms need to be unmistakably recognised while periphrasis often changes a term beyond recognition.

A metaphorical loan facilitates perception and recognition both in translation and interpreting, as it reflects a metaphorical concept and therefore it is immediately accessed. It is important to draw "links from metaphorical language to metaphorical thought". (Gibbs 2002: 83) A metaphorical term reflects a figurative mode of thinking. Comprehension of a metaphorical term and its translation is a cognitive act, the same as its creation. Translation of metaphorical terms is a cognitive skill that needs to be acquired and developed.

## 6. Phraseological terms in stylistic use in verbal and visual discourse

Visual representation has become cross-cultural. We see the same advertisements, logos, and cartoons crossing language boundaries. Metaphorical understanding and translation of a metaphorical term makes this kind of visual cross-cultural communication possible while literal translation is not conducive to use of visual material, containing phraseological terms, in another language. Phraseological terms are stable and figurative, and like all other PUs they lend themselves to stylistic use, including visual representation, due to figurative meaning and imagery.<sup>14</sup> A literal frame of mind does not work in figurative meaning construction. For instance, in an advertisement (Fig. 1) the phraseological term

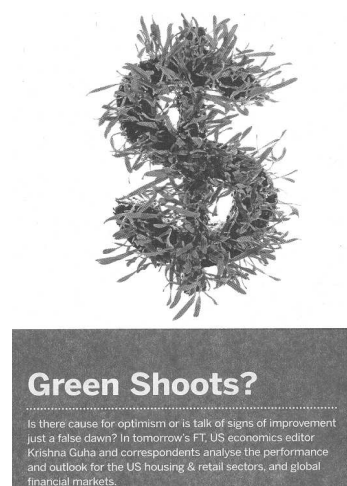


Fig. 1. Financial Times, May 4 – May 10, 2009, p. 22.

<sup>14</sup> For more on visual representation of phraseological image, see Naciscione 2010: Ch. 6.

*green shoots* (meaning: economic recovery/growth) has undergone stylistic use which is possible due to metaphorical conceptualisation. This is a case of multimodal use, combining verbal discourse and visual representation of the metaphorical term *green shoots* that features the dollar sign, a semiotic element – a symbol of wealth and prosperity. The dollar sign is sprouting; it is already covered with fresh green shoots. This advertisement is a classic case of a visual pun in the printed media.

Stylistic use of the term *green shoots* is widespread across the media. For example, *The Daily Telegraph* (June 18, 2008, p. 23) has published an analytical financial article with the headline “Green shoots? Strictly for the colour-blind”. Stylistically, the headline is an extended phraseological metaphor: “**Green shoots?** Strictly for the colour-blind”. Moreover, the PU *green shoots* appears in the first paragraph at the beginning of the article and is repeated at the very end of the article like a frame construction, encompassing the text of the article and extending the metaphor.

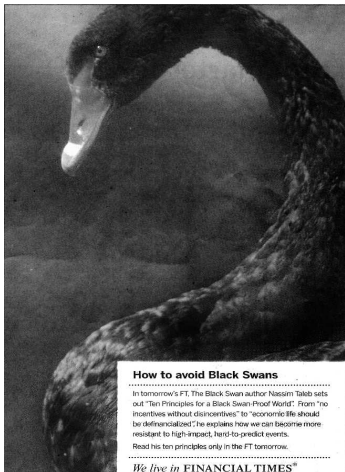


Fig. 2. Financial Times, April 7, 2009, p. 30.

Let us have a closer look at another visual representation of a phraseological term (Fig. 2). Apart from the direct ornithological meaning, *a black swan* is a polysemous PU. The first meaning of the PU is something that is impossible or cannot exist (historically, e.g. in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the European assumption was that all swans were white). The second meaning appeared in the 21<sup>st</sup> century: a huge rare unpredictable problem (the origin – Nassim Nicholas Taleb’s book *The Black Swan*, 2007). It acquired regular use after the collapse of the US financial system in 2008, and since then has been used to denote a rare event of great impact that is hard to predict, one that turns into a problem.

New metaphorical conceptualisations may emerge as a result of “mappings across conceptual domains” (Lakoff and Johnson [1980] 2003: 252). This is widespread in terminology, too. It is a common phenomenon, called “migration of metaphorical terms between disciplines” (Luminița 2003: 327), that is, when a term is borrowed from one conceptual domain into another.

A non-metaphorical translation of a metaphorical phraseological term would create difficulties in the translation of stylistic use of the given term or even make it impossible:

- 1) in stylistic use in verbal discourse, e.g. extended metaphor:



This isn't just one black swan. It is a bunch of black swans that have hung out<sup>15</sup> for a while and created a giant problem. (*Time*, Feb. 9, 2009, p. 19)

- 2) in the formation of derivatives, compounds, neologisms or nonce words, e.g. "a **black swan**-proof world" (formed with the help of the productive affix -proof), which appears in the subheading of an article accompanied by another picture of a black swan (*Financial Times*, April 8, 2009, p. 1);
- 3) in visual discourse, e.g. Fig. 2 is a visual pun and a verbal extension of the image of the phraseological term *a black swan*. A nonmetaphorical translation of the caption "How to avoid Black Swans" would not make any sense: the visual representation, which is a pun, is based on a play of the direct meaning (the bird) and the terminological meaning of the PU.

Interestingly, in practice the advice of terminologists to use a descriptive, non-metaphorical translation is not always followed in Latvia, especially in two areas – by experts in their day-to-day work, e.g. criminal investigators will use the original metaphorical loan translation, and visual artists who work for the media and advertising as the image of a metaphorical term is essential for visual representation. This is clearly seen by the advertisement of the SEB Bank in Riga, Latvia, 2010 (Fig. 3).

To advertise a life assurance scheme for the child, the author of the advertisement has used the metaphorical loan translation *starta kapitāls* (EN *start-up capital*) instead of the non-metaphorical "sākumkapitāls" (initial capital) as advised by *Tilde*.

The details depicted lead us to the domain of sports. The advertisement is a visual representation of the conceptual metaphor LIFE IS A RACE: a helmet metonymically stands for safety, a chequered flag has contiguous associations with victory in a race, a Ferrari is associated with car racing and speed, the number 1 on the T-shirt stands for the winner of a race, while start-up capital is a phraseological term from the

Uzkrājums bērna  
nākotnei!



Fig. 3. Savings for the child's future.

<sup>15</sup> To hang out (coll.) – to last despite difficulties, keep going (*Longman Dictionary of Phrasal Verbs* 1983: 275).

domain of economics: the money needed to start at the earliest stage. The words “start-up capital” appear on a chequered flag that is displayed at the finish line. The flag is commonly associated with the winner of the race, the first driver to get past the chequered flag.

With the increasing use of visualisation in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, new metaphorical terms undergo stylistic use in media texts as soon as they come into use, e.g. the rise of the new phraseological term *cloud computing* in IT is already accompanied in the media by a visual representation of a cloud being locked, reflecting the fear of the enormous power of cloud computing.<sup>16</sup> The image of a metaphorical term is a salient element; thus it is essential for comprehension of the term both in the SL and in the TL in all types of discourse and contexts.

## 6. Concluding remarks

A cognitive approach to phraseological terms is a tool that helps to recognise metaphor as a technique of abstract reasoning in the formation of terminology and to comprehend figurative meaning construction across languages.

Thus, a cognitive view is essential not only to create and interpret a metaphorical term, but also to translate it into other languages. Translation is a vital part of cross-cultural communication; it is a basic cognitive operation of the mind, including creation of metaphorical loans in the translation of terminology.

I believe that translation of metaphorical terms is likely to gain greater interest in the future due to increasing pragmatic need for terms that are concise, capable of preserving the original image and of creating immediate associations, which is of great pragmatic value. The necessity is acute for more research on the salience of metaphors in terminology and their translation in general and phraseological terms in particular, as they constitute a serious challenge for both translation and interpreting.

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<sup>16</sup> See the article “An E.U. snag for cloud computing” in the International Herald Tribune, Sept. 20, 2010, p. 19.

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## Kognitywne podejście do tłumaczenia jednostek frazeologicznych

### Streszczenie

Tłumaczenie jednostek frazeologicznych jest nowym obszarem badań zarówno w teorii frazeologii, jak i studiach nad przekładem. Konieczne jest zrozumienie podstawowych założeń frazeologii, obejmujących znaczenie figuratywne jako cechę kategorialną i metaforyczną konceptualizację: związek między metaforą i myślą, rolę metafory w nauce i funkcję figuratywnego języka w terminologii. Większość frazeologizmów terminologicznych to jednostki o charakterze metaforycznym. W ujęciu teorii stylistyki kognitywnej są one konstytutywnymi metaforami, integralną częścią zarówno teorii nauki, jak i odnośnych terminów. Kognitywne podejście do s frazeologizowanych terminów jest narzędziem rozpoznania metafory jako techniki abstrakcyjnego myślenia w formowaniu terminologii. Tłumaczenie nie jest po prostu częścią międzykulturowej komunikacji – jest to kognitywna operacja umysłu. Tłumaczenie s frazeologizowanych terminów uwidacznia rolę teorii kognitywnej w praktyce przekładowej.