Figurative Thought and Language in the Human Universe

Figurative Thought and Language in the Human Universe

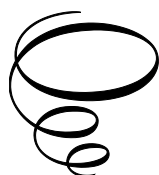Edited by

Mario Brdar
Goran Milić
Dubravka Vidaković Erdeljić
and Rita Brdar-Szabó

Figurative Thought and Language in the Human Universe

Edited by Mario Brdar, Goran Milić, Dubravka Vidaković Erdeljić
and Rita Brdar-Szabó

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Part III: Figurativity in Literary Discourse

Part IV: Figurativity across Languages

FIGURATIVE THOUGHT AND LANGUAGE IN THE HUMAN UNIVERSE: INTRODUCTION

MARIO BRDAR, GORAN MILIĆ, DUBRAVKA VIDAKOVIĆ ERDELJIĆ & RITA BRDAR-SZABÓ

The present volume contains a collection of contributions originally presented at the *Third International Symposium on Figurative Thought and Language*, held in Osijek (Croatia), 26–28 April, 2017. The symposium was intended as a forum for the discussion of links between figurative thought and language started at previous events in Thessaloniki (2014) and Pavia (2015).

As stated in the call for papers for the symposium, it is quite obvious that cognitive linguistics was at the time of its inception more or less all about conceptual metaphors, and also to a degree about metonymies and image schemas. As a result of the rapid development and diversification of the cognitive linguistic field of research, new topics and methodologies emerged, gradually pushing conceptual metaphors and metonymies out of the centre stage. However, vigorous research into how conceptual metaphors and metonymies interact and motivate grammatical structures that we have recently witnessed justifies its coming back into the limelight.

Papers presented at the symposium came from various theoretical and applied perspectives (e.g. cognitive linguistics, cognitive science, neuroscience and the philosophy of the mind), and methodologies (e.g., experimental protocols, cross-linguistic comparison, synchronic and diachronic analyses, translation, corpus studies), their topics including the impact of figuration on levels of linguistic analysis (morphology, lexis, semantics, pragmatics), on areas of grammar, on various types of discourse (e.g., the discourse of economics, law, medicine, philosophy, politics, psychology and psychotherapy), as well as figurative multimodality and the relationship between language and emotions, language and humour, irony, sarcasm, euphemism, etc.

The chapters in this volume are a selection of the above, grouped according to the locus of figurative effects in terms of the human embodiment. This has been one of the central theoretical pillars of cognitive linguistics from its beginning. As Lakoff (1987: xiv) puts it,

> the structures used to put together our conceptual systems grow out of bodily experience and make sense in terms of it; moreover, the core of our conceptual systems is directly grounded in perception, body movement, and experience of a physical and social nature.

It will be seen that embodiment is much more than literally the fact that our conceptualization is crucially motivated by the physical interaction with the external world. Note above that Lakoff also mentions our experience of social nature. Further, Lakoff and Johnson (1999: 37) claim that "the very properties of concepts are created as a result of the way the brain and body are structured and the way they function in interpersonal relations and in the physical world." More recently, Gibbs (2017: 450), claims that "[e]mbodiment refers to the ways persons' bodies and bodily interactions with the world shape their minds, actions, and personal, cultural identities." He goes on to warn that "all these general views of embodiment emphasize human bodies as individual entities," and that because of this focus on the individual orientation we fail to appreciate "critical dynamics of bodies in interaction, something which is critical to our ability to participate in shared meaning-making activities" (Gibbs 2017: 451).

Embodiment as a general source of motivation should therefore be understood in the widest possible sense, extending radially from body to its immediate physical environment and then to the social and cultural environment in which it is active. As pointed out by Rohrer (2007: 29),

> 'Embodiment' is also used to refer to the social and cultural context in which the body, cognition, and language are perpetually situated. For example, such context can include factors such as governmental language policy, cross-cultural contact/aversion, or the influence of historical scientific models and theories on individual language learners […]. Similarly, the context can include the cultural artefacts that aid and manifest cognition—many of which are not only constrained by but are also extensions of the body...

Human language (as object language) is not just a cognitive, but also a social and cultural artefact that does not exist in a vacuum. It is, too, part of human environment. Though we might assume that it is primarily shaped by cognitive factors that reflect our physical existence, there is no

denying that the usage of language can exert certain influence on its own structure by providing input for certain cognitive processes that then, so to say, come full circle in reshaping language. In other words, it is in part shaped and constrained by the givens of the system at a given point in time, e.g. by analogical tendencies.

The chapters in this volume follow this expansion of embodiment from the literally bodily experience towards interpersonal and to social and cultural superstructures. Thus, the two chapters in Part One focus on figuration in the world of senses and feelings, i.e. embodiment at its most literal and individual and interpersonal. They are followed by five chapters that are concerned with linking figuration to action in the human world in the context of wider social issues, mainly in public discourse (the language of politics and media). Part Three carries two chapters documenting the role of figuration in literary texts. The volume closes with four chapters examining figurative language in cross-linguistic and trans-linguistic perspective, including the study figurative uses of glossonyms.

Confronting euphemism and hyperbole in the olfactory domain, Rémi Diggonet demonstrates the experiential and cultural motivation of a particular sense in speech. The elaboration of a unique paradigm, namely substitution, in lieu of contrasting two antagonistic figures proves suitable to i. showing similar cognitive processes at work, ii. organizing the miscellany of formal expressions engendered by both processes, iii. structuring the motivated character of euphemistic and hyperbolic expressions in olfaction (non-gradability, affection, hedonicity, intimacy), iv. adapting functions of degree figures (perceptual, emotional, social, political, ironical) to the olfactory domain.

Kiki Tsapakidou's paper aims to identify and explore the collocational context of the Greek lexical units συναίσθημα/*sinesthima* 'emotion' and *αίσθημα*/*esthima* 'feeling' when these words appear in emotive talk, i.e. instances of spoken or written text where language performs the expression of emotional experience. Based on data drawn from a corpus of written natural discourse subjected to The Metaphor Identification Procedure (MIPVU, Steen et al. 2010), Tsapakidou primarily focuses on the metaphorical expressions and the emotion terms within the collocates and their interplay in expressing subjects' emotions to explore if the corresponding concepts are equally "emotionally charged", if they have a distinct conceptual content and are, consequently, interchangeable. The analysis finds that *sinesthima* largely –if not typically– collocates with metaphorical expressions and basic emotion terms, and *esthima* with non-metaphorical, psychosocial emotion ones, both differences suggesting differentiated semantic/conceptual contents. The different expressive and

communicative role of the collocates suggests that despite sharing important conceptual elements and source domains, the linguistic metaphors tend to be decisively differentiated with respect to their expressivity. These and other findings, such as greater heterogeneity and quantity of metaphorical collocations of *sinesthima* over *esthima*, suggest that although the two concepts do share a common "experiential core", the numerous metaphorical mappings and linguistic realizations reflect an experiential background for *sinesthima* that is absent from *esthima*, which in turn challenges their interchangeability.

Tanja Gradečak, Goran Milić and Drago Župarić-Iljić's chapter is an exploration of interplay of a perennially current topic of migration and the medium as a site for useful methodological and theoretical marriage of sorts. The hypothesized methodological power of Google tools and the Web is harnessed as a vantage point to study the evolution of prevalent Croatian discourse on migrations and the construction of the public perception of the actors involved. The paper focuses on figurative language as a linguistic strategy in communicating ideas and worldviews on migration- and refugee-related issues in academic discussions on the terminology used to describe categories of groups and/or individuals. The methodology features a combination of Critical Discourse Analytic methods with Corpus Analysis ones, used to build a web-based corpus of staple Croatian reference books on sociology as basic references in most migration studies in Croatia to test the hypothesis that scholars, as authority-based, 'top-down' sources, had embraced the readily available frames of refugees as moving water bodies. The results suggest that the politically correct, objective and scientifically grounded top-down approach may indeed be used to promote the linguistic shaping of public opinion, as opposed to the simplified and severely reduced image of refugees and migrants presented by the media, which banks on the emotional impact of certain alternatives. Linguistic borrowing (direct transposition and translation) of the English migration-related technical terms in(to) Croatian is suggested to potentially lead to the impoverishing of possible migration-related Croatian synonyms.

The chapter by Kader Baş aims at investigating metaphorical variation in Turkish political discourse by identifying and analyzing the types of metaphors employed by the members of conservative and liberal political parties in Turkey. The choice of a one or the other metaphor may shift attention towards a specific intention, i.e. frame the message in order to suggest a particular perspective on a given issue. This effect is omnipresent in political speech, since politicians tend to ornament their discourse with carefully-selected metaphors to help gain people's support

of their political and ideological agendas. Building on Steen's Deliberate Metaphor Theory and Buller and Burgoon's Interpersonal Communication Theory findings, the chapter aims at spotting relevant deceptive cues displayed in figurative speech.

In her chapter, Mirna Gudlin studies the role of the repetition of phonemes, morphemes, words, phrases, and sentences in political discourse. As her approach to repetitions is informed by the theory of conceptual metaphor, she draws on research on the CONDUIT metaphor which defines a spatial relationship between the form and content (Lakoff and Johnson 2003) and argues that language can be understood through space and that spatial metaphors summed up as LINGUISTIC EXPRESSIONS ARE CONTAINERS can be applied to linguistic expressions. The main postulate on which the paper is based is the conceptual metaphor MORE OF FORM IS MORE OF CONTENT —i.e. the longer the language expression and/or form, the larger the amount of meaning, one of the ways to enlarge the form being through the repetition. The analysis of authentic language data has shown that the role of repetitions in political discourse is twofold: on the one hand repetitions can expose ignorance, indifference, cover-up, etc. but on the other hand they can serve as an efficient instrument of emphasis, eloquence and persuasion.

In Chapter six Sami Chatti addresses the deliberate use of metaphors in political discourse to verbalize deception. He argues that due to their succinctness, indirectness and emotional bias, metaphors constitute effective linguistic instruments to conceive and enact deceit in political communication. Chatti places a strong emphasis on the emotional bias of metaphors derived from our embodied experience, as emotionally charged metaphors seem to exhibit a stronger communicative effect and potentially generate strategic shifts in people's perspective and behaviour. Drawing on Steen's Deliberate Metaphor Theory and Buller and Burgoon's Interpersonal Deception Theory, he looks into the use of the WALL metaphor in Tunisian politics in which figurative expressions are arranged around three conceptual metaphors: (i) POLITICS IS MOTION ii) DIFFICULTIES ARE IMPEDIMENTS; and (iii) STATE FAILURE IS CAR CRASH. He concludes that the ability of metaphoric framing to emphasize certain aspects of a concept while demoting others along with the intentional reference to the eventual catastrophe triggers an emotional response, which, in turn, may shift the receiver's perspective and interfere with his/her opinion and judgment.

Closing Part II, Brdar and Brdar-Szabó examine the use of two metonymies CAPITAL FOR GOVERNMENT and COUNTRY FOR GOVERNMENT

in metonymic chains stretching through a portion of text to boost its cohesion while maintaining topic continuity. If it is assumed that metonymic vehicles alternate in a simple and elegant way thus producing metonymic chains of the form CAPITAL-COUNTRY-CAPITAL-COUNTRY-etc. it could be expected that frequency of metonymies of the type CAPITAL FOR GOVERNMENT and the type COUNTRY FOR GOVERNMENT is fairly even. However, the close examination of authentic usage events from Croatian and Hungarian reveals that this is not the case as the frequency of the CAPITAL FOR GOVERNMENT metonymy is generally much lower than the frequency of the COUNTRY FOR GOVERNMENT metonymy. Authors argue that the use of the former metonymy is constrained by the interplay of cultural-conceptual and communicative pragmatic factors, such as perspective and the degree of the empathy or its lack towards the authority in question, made possible by a variant of the conceptual metaphor EMOTIONAL DISTANCE IS DISTANCE IN PHYSICAL SPACE.

Part III opens with Martha Lampropoulou examining the contribution of the blending theory to the analysis of folktale narratives through a study of 22 Serbian folktales chosen for their mirroring of the Serbian mentality, character, customs and beliefs as basic general features of folktales. The paper provides an informative background of the latter, including relevant superstitions and mythical characters as a crucial backdrop to the analysis in terms of blending. The theoretical background follows both axes of research commonly suggested in the study of folklore, identification and interpretation, argued to accommodate both major types of morphological analysis of folkloric tales, *viz.* the more empirical and inductive syntagmatic approach and the more speculative and deductive paradigmatic approach (Greimas 1963). The analyses of specific folktales suggest that emerging blends draft a number of preexisting 'images' deeply rooted and dependent on previous cultural knowledge and tradition, which in turn caters for more holistic bits of the tale,rendering the morphology of such fairytales predictable but still capturing and exciting. These and other elements enable the deconstruction of the folktales via a cognitive framework, where all the cognitive links are of primary importance.

Juani Guerra's paper analyzes 93 cases where a particular grammatical unit, *still*, is used in Virginia Wolfe's seminal novel *Mrs. Dalloway*. The author address the perceptual, conceptual, narrative, and artful dynamic patterns of *still* by combining methodological frameworks from Cognitive Grammar and basic notions from Complexity Theory, *viz*. a highly dynamicist approach to complexity and meaning construction and the biopoetic approach as a dynamicist extension of Tsur's Cognitive Poetics. The visual constructivist abstraction of the conceptualization/grammaticalization of the unit in *Mrs.*

Dalloway is argued to be perceptually grounded, as *still* is schematically mapped onto initial objective forms that gradually profile the observer(s) as conceptualizer(s), The author identifies and diagrams Virginia Woolf's constructivist organization of *still* in *Mrs. Dalloway* as the product of a complex narrative organization/evolution that dissipates from an initial structuring phase. The scales reveal a chaotic-deterministic pattern in the evolution of still triggered by semantic (negative) entropy. This cognitive schematization of the embodied initial conditions of the conceptual grammar of *still* aims to support the author's claim that revealing the hidden sociocognitive evolution of *still* contributes to the narrative robustness of Literary Modernist minimal grammatical elements as robust cognitive-affective PoV operators.

In *Exploring The Interface Of Multi-Lingual Proficiency And Metonymic Competence*, Tímea Berényi-Nagy & Gábor Győri address an issue of growing interest in language acquisition research, *viz.* the connection between figurative language comprehension and language acquisition processes. Starting from the tenets of two dominant models, the Dynamic Model of Multilingualism and Hufeisen's Factor Model, the study investigates the relation between L3 learners' and speakers' multilingual proficiency and their metonymic competence, i.e. the transferability of metonymies in the case of L3 learners. Intercomprehension is suggested as the key notion, hypothesized to provide insight into the thought processes of Hungarian native speakers with L2/L3 German and L2/L3 English as participants in a task involving a think aloud protocol to investigate the effect of the positive transfer of metonymies during intercomprehension tasks. Swedish sentences containing metonymic expressions as cognates were presented to subjects, who were tasked with inferring the meaning of the listed words with the help of their foreign language knowledge and asked to verbalize as well as comment on their attempts at a solution. The results show that the metonymic expressions seem to function as cues in the case of intercomprehension by activating the relevant ICMs. This lends support to the power of the cognitive linguistic apparatus in providing explanations unobtainable from the dominant multilingual models themselves to help shed light on the relationship between the multilingual mental lexicon and multilingual proficiency.

Goran Schmidt's study sets out to describe and analyse the process of translating metaphor, not by a direct observation of the process itself, but indirectly, by observing its product. The author works with translations of the metaphorical expressions extracted from a corpus consisting of the original English dialogue of a cartoon along with the German and Croatian dubbed versions of the film extracted using the MIPVU procedure (Steen

et al. 2010), classified following the typology suggested in Conceptual Metaphor Theory and further developed by the author. Schmidt's attempt to examine if the same metaphors are kept in the other language or replaced with different ones, as well as to examine the reasons behind the changes yields five basic types of translation solutions, argued to be simple, precise and able to accommodate all the translation solutions found in the corpus. Similarity in the distribution of translation solution types, with paraphrase by non-metaphorical language as the dominant choice, is accounted for by the culturally-specific nature of the source expressions, leading Schmidt to suggest 'sharedness' and 'deliberateness' of metaphor as relevant criteria, with a tendency to translate shared and deliberate metaphors by metaphor. The influence of conventionality and directness is suggested as an avenue for further research.

The chapter by Lajos Nagy analyses authentic linguistic realizations of the metaphor TROUBLE IS A CONTAINER in German, English and Hungarian to establish similarities and differences on the conceptual level and to determine what factors play a role in the cross-linguistic and cross-cultural variation of mappings including TROUBLE as target domain. After examining the corpus data in the light of the three basic factors regarding universality and variation, i.e. embodiment, socio-cultural experience and differential cognitive styles, and building on Kövecses' (2005) elaborate description of the cognitive processes causing cross-linguistic differences on the linguistic level, the author concludes that in the case of his analysis the differential cognitive styles seem to play the most prominent role regarding cross-linguistic variation. The results of the combined quantitative and qualitative analysis suggest that the metaphor TROUBLE IS A CONTAINER has a large number of conventionalized expressions in all three languages but their linguistic realization, especially regarding the degree of elaboration and specificity, shows great variation.

The volume closes with Ivana Čizmar's cross-linguistic look at possible motivations for conceptualizing languages as difficult by examining the ways 21 languages express the concept of LACK OF UNDERSTANDING, itself suggested to be metonymically-based. The paper combines genetic and typological classification, as well as analysis based on writing systems, orthographic depth, and research in neuroscience to argue that the choice of languages used to convey the concept might be motivated by geographical distance and historical/cultural contact. Special attention is paid to ortography-based typology, as the author draws on distinction between languages with deep vs. shallow orthography to account for the place of Chinese and Greek as languages most frequently used in target expression, along with Hebrew, Arabic and Turkish,

ascribing this to their genetic difference from Indo-European, with Greek as an exception. Čizmar's data suggest that the choice of different languages and their respective cultures for this particular purpose goes back to a variety of cultural, historical and other reasons, supporting Kövecses' (2005) claim that culture is an integral part in the studies of the mind.

It is our hope that the present volume will have retained some of the liveliness of the discussion during the conference at which preliminary versions of the article in the volume were presented. We also hope that the views expressed by the authors present an exciting stimulus for further discussion. We would again like to express our gratitude to all the members of the organising team of the conference and to all the volunteers (including the students) who helped out so well during the event by managing matters behind the scenes.

References

Gibbs, Raymond W. 2017. Embodiment. In *The Cambridge Handbook of Cognitive Linguistics*, ed. Barbara Dancygier, 449–462. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Kövecses, Zoltán. 2005. *Metaphor in Culture: Universality and Variation.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Lakoff, George. 1987. *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things. What Categories Reveal about the Mind*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Lakoff, George and Mark Johnson. 1999. *Philosophy in the Flesh: The Embodied Mind and its Challenges to Western Thought*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Rohrer, Tim. 2007. Embodiment and experientialism. In *The Oxford handbook of cognitive linguistics*, ed. Dirk Geeraerts and Hubert Cuyckens, 25–47. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Steen, Gerard, Aletta G. Dorst, J. Berenike Herrmann, Anna Kaal, Tina Krennmayr and Trijntje Pasma. 2010. *A method for linguistic metaphor identification. From MIP to MIPVU.* Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

PART I:

FIGURATIVITY IN THE WORLD OF SENSES AND FEELINGS

CHAPTER ONE

EUPHEMYSM AND HYPERBOLE
AS FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE
IN OLFACTORY DOMAIN

RÉMI DIGONNET

1. Introduction

The study of euphemism and hyperbole in the olfactory domain aims to demonstrate the experiential and cultural motivation of a particular sense in speech. The theoretical definition of the two figurative processes first shows that despite their basic opposition in terms of degree, namely, attenuation versus exaggeration, some common ground is shared, such as metaphoric grounding, pervasiveness, and gradability. The attempt to reach a formal typology for each figure paradoxically shows instead the usefulness of a comprehensive approach where both are placed along a continuum (based on the concept of substitution), rather than the sterile addition of a collection of forms in a miscellany. The recourse to a unique paradigm sheds light on the hyperbolic and euphemistic motivations for the olfactory domain. The experience, innate or socially construed, of a non-gradable, affective, hedonistic, intimate sense like olfaction appears to give rise to euphemistic and hyperbolic expressions in speech for various reasons, whether they be perceptual, emotional, social or even political.

1.1. Euphemism and hyperbole: antagonistic linguistic devices?

1.1.1. Antagonistic substitutes

Euphemism—*Euphemismas* (Gr.), *phêmi* (I speak) and *eu* (well) —and hyperbole—*Hyperbolê* (Gr.), *hyper* (beyond) and *ballein* (throw) —rely on figurative language as the literal linguistic expression, the proper word

or the proper expression, is replaced by another one through a process of substitution or linguistic detour. The newly-coined expression manifests understatement in the case of euphemism (Webster Dictionary): "The substitution of an agreeable or inoffensive expression for one that may offend or suggest something unpleasant (*pass away* is a widely used euphemism for *die*)." The initial offensive statement is indeed replaced by an inoffensive one, less brutal for the audience (Jamet 2012: 3): "A euphemism consists in replacing the original signifier, perceived as being offensive or unpleasant, by another one; it is often referred to as a *veil* or a *shroud* thrown over the signified, as if to conceal it":

(1) Der ja eigentlich gar kein *Geruch* war, sondern ein *Atem*, ein Ausatmen, das Ende aller Gerüche. (*Das Parfum*, 44)[1]
(2) Which really was no *smell*, but a *breath*, an exhalation of breath, the end of all smells. (*Perfume*, 37)
(3) Qui de fait n'était nullement une *odeur*, mais un *souffle*, une expiration, la fin de toutes les odeurs. (*Le Parfum*, 41)

Along the deep-rooted distinction between literal versus non-literal, i.e. figurative meaning, the newly-coined expression manifests overstatement in the case of hyperbole (Claridge 2011: 5): "The literal expression agrees with the extralinguistic facts in the given context whereas the hyperbolic expression exceeds the (credible) limits of fact in the given context." To strike the audience with an effect, hyperbole relies on overstatement and exaggeration (Claridge 2011: 6): "The distinction between what is literally said (linguistic) and what is actually the case (extra-linguistic), creat[es] the exaggeration on the basis of the gap between the 'meanings' of the two:"

(4) Und er konnte sich nicht vorstellen, daß andere Menschen seinen *Duft* nicht ebenfalls als *stinkend* empfänden. (*Das Parfum*, 185)
(5) And because he could not imagine that other people would not also perceive his *odour* as a *stench*. (*Perfume*, 157)
(6) Et il ne pouvait imaginer que d'autres hommes ne trouvassent pas son *odeur* tout aussi *pestilentielle*. (*Le Parfum*, 169)

The labelling of either euphemism or hyperbole is quite telling of their various perceptions and the multiple directions they lead to. Euphemism,

---

[1] All numbered examples, except when stipulated, refer to the specific corpus, *Perfume by Patrick Süskind*, followed by the page number. For clarity and space, most examples are limited to the English version.

which was first coined in 1656 in *Glossographia* by Thomas Blount (Burchfield 1985: 13), is a complex and shape-shifting notion (Muntéano 1953: 153) as illustrated by the various -isms attached to it: euphemism—an alternative to a dispreferred expression, in order to avoid possible loss of face (Allan and Burridge 1991: 11)—, dysphemism –an expression with connotations that are offensive either about the denotatum or to the audience (Allan and Burridge 1991: 26) —, cacophemism, orthophemism –an account for direct or neutral expressions that are not sweet-sounding, evasive or overly polite (euphemistic), nor harsh, blunt or offensive (dysphemistic) (Allan and Burridge 2006: 29) —, X-phemism—a general term for euphemism, dysphemism, and orthophemism—, doublespeak, newspeak, politically correct, weasel words, evasion, propaganda, etc. Hyperbole (OED 1989: 1529) follows the same complex definition due to its multiple counterparts: exaggeration (OED 1989: 1565), overstatement (OED 1989: 1803, verb 1792) —a non-intentional and subconscious process (Gibbs 1994)—, extreme case formulation—extreme expressions such as *best*, *always*, *brand new* (Pomerantz 1986, Norrick 2004) —, and intensity—an intensification in the emotional sense, an emphasis (Labov 1984).

If variation is made obvious for euphemism with its -ism varia, it is also visible thanks to the distinctive linguistic domains it permeates: lexicon, syntax, pragmatics, etc., as suggested by Bolinger (1981: 148): "Euphemism is not restricted to the lexicon; there are grammatical ways of toning something down without actually changing the content of the message." The olfactory domain is a good illustration of the existence of various grammatical structures for the same verb *smell* (agentive, experiential, percept-oriented) producing euphemisms:

Agentive structure (the subject is the agent, cf. *listen to*):
I smell a rat / something fishy (bad premonition)

Experiential structure (the subject is the experiencer, cf. *hear*):
I could smell hypocrisy / bigotry (specific atmosphere)

Percept structure (the subject is the percept, cf. *sound*):
It smells of bullshit in here
Ça sent le soufre (explosion) / *le roussi* (danger) / *le fagot* (heresy) / *le sapin* (death)

Moreover, such examples highlight the fact that euphemism is not only a matter of word change but also results in a more distant process through figurative language, as suggested by Allan (2012: 5): "There are basically

two ways in which X-phemisms are created: by a changed form for the
word or expression and by figurative language that results from the per-
ceived characteristics of the denotatum." The diversity of formal expres-
sions to characterise hyperbole and euphemism should not prevent us from
ignoring the various reasons for their existence, potentially serving as a
"shield" or a "weapon" (Allan 2012: 5):

> X-phemisms are motivated by a speaker's desire to be seen to be taking a cer-
> tain stance and by playfulness. An interesting perspective on the human psyche
> is to be gained from the study of X-phemisms used as a shield against the dis-
> approbation of our fellows or malign fate, and others used as a weapon against
> those we dislike or as a release valve for the vicissitudes of life.

1.1.2. Grounded in metaphor

Both euphemism and hyperbole appear to be grounded in metaphor as
they share some identical mechanisms. The substitutive view of metaphor
(Aristotle 1950) anchored in the transfer of one word for the other, or the
displacement between the original expression and the new one, is well
suited for undertones or overtones. The analogical view of metaphor
(Dumarsais 1988) which underlines similarities between the literal expres-
sion and the figurative one also corresponds to the expression of euphe-
mism and hyperbole as they minimise or reinforce the same original idea.
Contrary to metaphor where similar semantic characteristics are almost
lost and often must be sought, similarities are more enhanced in euphe-
mism and hyperbole since the general idea is kept well alive. The interac-
tive view of metaphor, initiated by Richards's alternation of the *tenor* and
the *vehicle* (1936) and completed by Black's interaction of the *focus* and
frame (1962), where the breaking of isotopy (Rastier 1996) or the isotopic
clash between a literal meaning and a metaphorical meaning in a sentence
reveals the presence of a metaphor, is less pertinent for the expression of
euphemism and hyperbole as both figurative processes often engage a co-
herent semantic expression bringing about no semantic clash, except for
some distant figurative expressions. After the semantic clash, the ontologi-
cal conflict of metaphor as initiated by Prandi (1992), appears even less
pertinent for the characterisation of euphemism and hyperbole as both pro-
cesses do not openly display an ontological conflict. The metaphorical
conflict gives way to either attenuation or exaggeration of the same ontol-
ogy, except for some rare figurative detours where the understatement or
the overstatement is mixed with a metaphorical characterisation. The con-
ceptual view of metaphor through the concepts of *mapping* (Lakoff 1993)

and *blending* (Fauconnier and Turner 1998) appears less suited for the euphemistic or hyperbolic expressions *stricto sensu*, since only one domain, one mental space, is conveyed except in some cases when the understatement or the overstatement calls for a metaphorical support. In sum, euphemism (*thread of scent*) and hyperbole (*chaos of odours*), as figurative linguistic detours, share some characteristics of the metaphor, and even sometimes call for its support for more efficiency:

> (7) And when at last a puff of air would toss a delicate *thread of scent* his way, he would lunge at it and not let go. (35)
> (8) The result was that an indescribable *chaos of odours* reigned in the House of Baldini. (49)

Quite interestingly, on the surface level, the recourse to metaphor seems recurrent to define euphemisms or hyperboles. Between hiding and exposing, between covering and unveiling, euphemism tends to: avoid mentioning a given taboo when labelled "deodorizing spray and perfume" (Allan and Burridge 1991: 25), add an elegant stylistic variation when named "linguistic makeup" (Crespo Fernández 2005: 79), reveal and provoke when called "diaphanous lingerie" (Allan 2012: 39). Other metaphors are useful to signify hyperbolic statements and exaggeration: "overegg the pudding," "take it with a pinch of salt," "tell tall tales", etc.

Such examples illustrate the poetic inventiveness of metaphor to describe other figurative processes. The same poetic inventiveness can be found in euphemisation and hyperbolisation in speech as stipulated by Allan (2012: 5): "Many euphemisms and dysphemisms demonstrate the poetic inventiveness of ordinary people: they reveal a folk culture that has been paid too little attention by lexicographers, linguists, and literaticians—and, indeed, by the very people who use them: people like us."

1.1.3. Pervasiveness

As stipulated by Lakoff and Johnson, in *Metaphors we Live by* (1980), figurative language is pervasive in speech. There isn't any reason why metaphor should be the only figurative process to infuse everyday language. Euphemism is also well used on a daily basis as a "comprehensive phenomenon" (Jamet 2012: 3), a form of "verbal behavior" (Crespo Fernández 2005: 78) which serves a specific, functional purpose in social discourse (Fairclough 2008). Far from being restricted to mere stylistic devices, "euphemisms are embedded so deeply in our language that few of

us, even those who pride themselves on being plain speakers, never get through a day without using them" (Rawson 1981: 1). Such a regular use of euphemisms is the result of the user's unconsciousness when "we use euphemisms unconsciously—it might be the only acceptable term, or the term that everyone uses, and we therefore employ it without thinking" (Enright 2005: 121). The same goes with hyperbole in terms of common use: "Hyperbole is not only an arcane rhetorical figure, but rather, similar to metaphor, it is a common feature of everyday language use" (Claridge 2011: 1).

The variety of speech domains dedicated to the usage of euphemism and hyperbole is a good illustration of the pervasive dimension of both processes. Hyperbole engages persuasive and manipulative attitudes, often through emotional and comic processes: "The persuasive or even manipu-lative aspect of hyperbole may come to the fore in public speeches and de-bates. Newspapers might make use of its potential for 'sensationalisation.' Literature and television might exploit hyperbolic means for their emo-tional appeal or for their comic possibilities" (Claridge 2011: 2). No won-der sensationalism (gutter press, patriotism, politics), humour, and literary fields are well exploited by hyperbole. Conversely, the linguistic areas for euphemism seem more dedicated to central key domains such as taboo (beliefs, human body and functions, morality and society (Tournier 1985: 271–274)), politically correct, and literary ones.

What is more, both extreme processes are highly context-dependent. From the immediate situational context to the more distant cultural con-text, they can be well understood or totally misjudged: "Euphemism and dysphemism are principally determined by the choice of expression within a given context: both world spoken of, and the world spoken in" (Allan and Burridge 1991: 4). The perception of euphemism is variable as pointed out by Linfoot-Ham (2005: 228–229): "Euphemism classification is a grey area, and judgements may differ from person to person." The illustration given by Enright (2005: 122) is quite revealing about the importance of context: "If you are a West Indian, for example, you and your mates might quite happily refer to yourselves as 'niggahs' (the pronunciation deliber-ate), but the word 'nigger' is socially taboo, especially so when used by a white person." Hyperbole follows the same necessary contextualisation: "Hyperbole is represented by an utterance exceeding the facts by piling up too many semantic features of the same kind, which is recognisable via contextual or general word knowledge" (Claridge 2011: 21).

As mentioned above, understatement and overstatement are pervasive in the linguistic space (various domains), and yet well anchored in the ex-tralinguisic world through contextualisation. Euphemism treadmill and its

hyperbolic counterpart bring another stone to the pervasive dimension in time. Life duration of such figurative gradation processes can vary according to their usage and can disappear due to weakening or erosion. Claridge (2011: 32) insists on the various degrees of bleaching concerning hyperbole:

> Dead hyperboles are extremely bleached items, where the original literal meaning is no longer available (*terrific*). Inactive or latent hyperboles are those which are based on polysemous items and can be easily overlooked but also easily evoked as in fact hyperbolic. This group will contain items of various degrees of bleaching. Active hyperboles are truly new and creative instances.

Tournier (1985: 284) exposes the same process of euphemism treadmill (Pinker 2003) in French:

> L'euphémisme, après avoir chassé le mot tabou, prend sa place, mais devient peu à peu tabou, lui aussi, par une 'degradation progressive', une sorte d'érosion, si bien que le besoin finit par se faire sentir de remplacer cet euphémisme usé, par un nouvel euphémisme, qui s'usera à son tour, et ainsi de suite.

The disappearance of one euphemism brings another one to the fore. The result is an embedded structure of euphemisms through time as pointed out by Adams (1985: 45): "We have euphemisms for our euphemisms." Various English examples illustrate the on-going principle of euphemisation through time in taboo domains such as race, body, and sexual orientation:

Race: *Slaves, servants, boy, niggers, negroes, colored folk, blacks, people of color, African Americans* today

Body: *Lame, crippled, handicapped, disabled, person with a disability, physically-challenged, differently abled* today

Sexual orientation: *Faggot, dyke, queen, friend of Dorothy, homo, gay, LGBT, LGBTQIA* today

The same process can be extended to other languages (French) or focused on one variety of the same language (English), as illustrated by the taboo domain of morality, more precisely poverty, thinking about H. R. Clinton and her unfortunate *basket of deplorables*:

Morality: *Pauvres, indigents, sans-dents, gagne-petit, infortunés, déshérités, classes populaires, SDF, sans-ressource* today

Morality: *Povos, knackers* (Irl.), *bogans* (Aus.), *chavs* (UK)

1.1.4. Gradability

The question of degree is central to euphemism and hyperbole (Claridge 2011: 7) as both devices exhibit a change in scale, between what would have been the literal expression and the displayed figurative expression, between reality and speech. Exaggeration and attenuation proceed along the same pattern: a change of gradient or a perception of a gap between different representations of the same state of affairs.

Overstatement expresses an increasing of scale by emphasising reality (a semantic attribute expressing X is changed into an attribute more of X, i.e. more of the same) (Claridge 2011: 5). Understatement expresses a reduction of scale by avoiding harshness of reality (a semantic attribute expressing X is changed into an attribute less of X, i.e. less of the same). The voluntary change of gradient, the assumed change of gradability by the speaker aims to give a new perception of reality. Distortion of reality through a change in scale is what characterises euphemism and hyperbole, perceived as two extremes of the same gradable process. Such positive and negative gradable processes share the discursive conflictual characteristic of metaphor but not the ontological conflict existing in metaphor (two different domains). Such gradient-based processes share the isotopic characteristic of metonymy as long as the breaking in isotopy is not challenged (one domain only) but they are not restricted to the part-whole relationship of synecdoche or the cause-effect relationship of metonymy, among others. The linguistic disruption is due to a change in gradability only. Yet, this change in gradability can sometimes be supported by metaphor or metonymy.

Euphemism and hyperbole share gradability, yet they define two extremes, two poles of a scale or at least two opposite ways to disguise reality: minimising or maximising the real world. Euphemism is traditionally dedicated to attenuation and hyperbole to exaggeration, yet an inverted pattern seems possible when euphemism is perceived as overstatement and hyperbole is viewed as understatement. Such a change in paradigms is made possible in rare cases when the euphemism loses its power of attenuation and turns into a stigmatising form (*smell*), or when the hyperbole

loses its exaggeration force to become a neutral form (*stinks*) or even an undertone:

(9)   'But I *smell*', I stared at her rebelliously. 'No matter', she replied. (Jha 2001: 30)

(10)   Philippe's face grew black. Fresh? It stinks! The whole idea *stinks*'. (Jha 2001: 220)

2. Euphemism and hyperbole in the olfactory domain: from a collection of forms to a continuum

As it belongs to the body, a well-recognised taboo domain, olfaction is infused with euphemistic expressions to avoid the harshness of the private sphere of intimate smells. For a better understanding of euphemism and its formal linguistic representations, the mere collection of expressions needs to be improved into a variety of forms as mentioned by Adams (1985: 54): "Evidently, it's better to think of euphemisms as a variety of processes rather than a collection of expressions" and implemented by Tournier (1985):

Signifier deformation	*Gosh* for *God*
Para-phonemic substitution	*Great Scot* for *Great God*
Negation of the contrary	*She is no saint* for *she is evil*
Metonymy	*Tail* for *vagina*
Metaphor	*Kick the bucket* for *die*
Borrowing	*Au naturel* for *naked*
Nickname	*Old Nick* for *Devil*
Circumlocution	*Four-letter word* for *fuck*
Acronym	*VD* for *veneral disease*
Deletion	*Bl***** for *bloody*
Omnibus word	*One of those* for *homosexual*
Minced words (apocope)	*Undies* for *underwear*
Neologism	*Mortician* for *undertaker*
Reversal (antiphrase)	*Angel of the bottomless pit* for *Devil*

Tournier (1991) later revised such a classification of euphemistic forms to come to a limited number of categories, namely, negation of the contrary, metaphor, metonymy, borrowing, circumlocution, and signifier reduction. In an attempt to reach a typology for euphemistic expressions Linfoot-Ham (2005) distinguished four linguistic-based categories (lexicon,

phonetics, semantics, loan-words), namely, word formation devices, pho-
nemic modification, semantic innovation, and loan-words. With the same
desire to limit the amount of categories, Crespo-Fernández (2006) restrict-
ed euphemism forms to three main categories: semantic devices, lexical
devices, and morphological devices. Another approach toward the elabora-
tion of a typology for euphemisms is paradoxically the recourse to the
concept of gradient as developed by Jamet (2010) with a gradation from
minimal substitution to complete substitution, a continuum illustrated here
in the olfactory domain (English and French):

Minimal substitution

Phoneme inversion (back slang or pig latin):
Mellsay for *smell* (diphthongs in English cannot be reversed > rare)
Gueschlin for *schinguer*

One phoneme substitution
Puir for *puer*

Partial substitution

Suppression of one word or part of the word (truncation):
Déo for *déodorant*

Suppression of several words (acronyms):
BO for *body odour*

Suppression plus addition (dash and asterisk):
It st**** for *it stinks*
Ça sch****** for *ça schlingue*

Replacement (rhyming slang):
Pen and ink for *stink*

Complete substitution

Substitution and replacement with onomatopoeia:
Sniff for *smell*
Schlinguer for *puer*