THE NOTION OF ‘SPACE’ IN METALANGUAGE: AN ANALYSIS OF METALINGUISTIC IDIOMS IN SPANISH, ENGLISH, AND CATALAN

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Introduction

- Linguistic action is often structured and addressed in figurative terms by means of concrete domains of experience.

- Reddy’s *conduit metaphor* as the main metaphorical model of linguistic communication.

Introduction

- Communication as a journey (Ruiz de Mendoza & Fornés 1998).

- Linguistic action as movement in space (Vanparys 1995):
  - the speaker can experience motion towards the hearer, the topic or the goal of the conversation,
  - information transfer as motion of ideas towards the hearer.

- The idea of linguistic action as motion along a path (Aznárez Mauleón 2006a).
Aim

1. To present two space-based metaphorical models involved in the conceptualization of linguistic communication in Spanish, English, and Catalan.

2. To expand understanding on how our experience in space helps to structure our conceptualization of the linguistic activity, and its representation in language.

3. From an interlinguistic perspective, to enhance awareness on how linguistic action is understood and structured in different cultures.
Data

- Metaphorical expressions > IDIOMS.

- Spanish verbal idioms related to ‘speaking’ → appropriate for teaching Spanish as a Foreign Language.
  - *Diccionario de locuciones verbales para la enseñanza del español* (Penadés Martínez 2002).

- **PhD research:**
  - Analysis of the process of creation of idioms from a Cognitive Linguistics perspective.
  - An example of how this analysis is being developed.
Data

- Translation equivalents in **English** and **Catalan**.

- Dictionary consultation procedure.
  
  
  - *Collins English-Spanish Dictionary* (Collins Cobuild).
  
  
Data

- **Functional equivalence**

  - Linguistic units with a maximum degree of similarity in meaning and -ideally- in image that are functionally equivalent at a discourse level.

  - 1. Behaviour of idioms in context + systematization in prototypical uses.

  - 2. Simple lexical units.

  (Dobrovol’skij 2014, in Mellado Blanco 2015: 155)
Theoretical approach

- Space as a **basic field** of conceptual representation.
- **Image schemas:**
  - **SOURCE + PATH + GOAL**
  - **CONTAINMENT**
  - **FORCE**
- The **LOCATION EVENT-STRUCTURE metaphor** (Lakoff & Johnson 1999).
Model 1

Linguistic communication is an event

The action of speaking is self-propelled movement (moving forward)

The purpose of communicating is reaching a destination

The speech process is a path

Undoing progress in communication and withdrawing one's statements is backward movement
Avoiding the topic of discussion is going off/hampering the path
Blocking the message and denying its truthfulness is hindering movement forward
Application to Spanish, English, and Catalan metalinguistic idioms

Undoing progress in communication and withdrawing one’s statements is backward movement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SPA.</th>
<th>ENG.</th>
<th>CAT.</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>echarse atrás</td>
<td>to back out, to take back</td>
<td>fer-se/tirar-se arrere</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>volverse atrás</td>
<td></td>
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Application to Spanish, English, and Catalan metalinguistic idioms

Avoiding the topic of discussion is going off/hampering the path

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<td>escapar/irse/salir por la tangente</td>
<td>to evade the issue</td>
<td>anar-se’n/fugir/eixir-se’n/sortir per la tangent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>salir por peteneras</td>
<td>to butt in with some silly remark</td>
<td>sortir amb un ciri trençat</td>
</tr>
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</table>

‘to hit with the head or horns’  
**Image schema FORCE**
Application to Spanish, English, and Catalan metalinguistic idioms

Blocking the message and denying its truthfulness is hindering movement forward

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<td>salir al paso</td>
<td>to be quick to deny</td>
<td>desmentir, negar</td>
</tr>
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- Literal representation in English and Catalan
Application to Spanish, English, and Catalan metalinguistic idioms

Model 2

Linguistic communication is an event.

The state of being in silence is having one’s words outside a bounded region.

Changing from being silent is moving words into a bounded region.

The action of speaking (causation) is changing words from one location to another (forced movement).

Words are objects.
Application to Spanish, English, and Catalan metalinguistic idioms

**MODEL 2**

**LINGUISTIC COMMUNICATION is an EVENT**

The state of being in silence is having one’s words outside a bounded region

Changing from being silent is moving words into a bounded region

The action of speaking (causation) is changing words from one location to another (forced movement)

**WORDS are OBJECTS**

- Uttering a statement is bringing words into a certain space
- Uttering a statement is moving words in front of the other person to make them visible
- Repeating a statement is placing it in a part of the other person’s body, causing annoyance
Application to Spanish, English, and Catalan metalinguistic idioms

Uttering a statement is bringing words into a certain space

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<td>sacar/traer a colación</td>
<td>to bring sth up</td>
<td>portar a col.lació</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>traer a cuento</td>
<td>to bring sth up</td>
<td>traure a rogle</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Application to Spanish, English, and Catalan metalinguistic idioms

Uttering a statement is moving words in front of the other person to make them visible

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<td>hacer presente</td>
<td>to notify</td>
<td>fer present</td>
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- Literal representation in English
Application to Spanish, English, and Catalan metalinguistic idioms

Repeating the same idea continuously is placing it in a part of the other person’s body, causing annoyance

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<td>pasar/refregar/restregar por las narices</td>
<td>to keep rubbing sbd's nose in sth</td>
<td>clavar per la cara</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Application to Spanish, English, and Catalan metalinguistic idioms

- **Conceptual level**: metaphors.

- **Linguistic level**: verbal idioms in Spanish → idiomatic or non-idiomatic correspondence in English and Catalan.

  Distinction of two metaphorical models supported by grammar.
Application to Spanish, English, and Catalan metalinguistic idioms

**MODEL 1**
- One actant.
- **Subject**: [alguien] volverse atrás.
  - Intransitive verbal idiom.

**MODEL 2**
- Two or three actants.
- **Subject + direct object**: [alguien] traer a cuento [algo], [alguien] sacar a colación [a alguien o algo].
- **Speaker + direct object + indirect object**: [alguien] pasar por las narices [algo a alguien].
  - Transitive verbal idioms.
Reflection

1. **Sistematicity** and **regularity** in the creation of metalinguistic idioms based on spatial and motion concepts.
   - Less idiomatic expressions found in English and Catalan.

2. **Interlinguistic approach** → two major forces involved.

(Aznárez Mauleón 2006a, 2006b; Barcelona 2003; Kövecses 2005; Larreta Zulategui 2001; Oliza Moreno 2006; Vanparys 1995).
Reflection

Universal cognitive processes
- Sensory-motor experience.
- Human behaviour.
- Concepts shared across cultures.

Cultural factors
- Culture-specific elements and traditions.

1. SPA. | ENG. | CAT.
--- | --- | ---
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2. SPA. | ENG. | CAT.
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3. SPA. | ENG. | CAT.
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Conclusions

- **Abstract** phenomena like communication are addressed as **physical and concrete**.

  “[…] we typically conceptualize the nonphysical in terms of the physical- that is, we conceptualize the less clearly delineated in terms of the more clearly delineated” (Lakoff & Johnson 1980: 59).

- Metaphors lend **coherence** to our thinking of linguistic action → how different languages understand the reality of linguistic communication.

### STARTING POINT

- To provide more examples & to find new cognitive models & to investigate non Indo-European languages.
THANK YOU

ANY SUGGESTIONS ON YOUR PART ARE MORE THAN WELCOME
REFERENCES


REFERENCES

DICTIONARIES


