METAPHORS CONCEPTUALISING THE EU'S CURRENCY – THE EURO – AND THEIR (UN)TRANSLATABILITY INTO ROMANIAN

Daniela DĂLĂLĂU[1]

Abstract

The purpose of this paper is twofold. First, we highlight the fact that metaphors have proved essential to the description, explanation and understanding of the EU's currency – the euro – and the challenges it has been facing over the last years. Secondly, we explore the extent to which metaphors conceptualising the euro in economic and financial press articles are translatable or not into Romanian.

In order to achieve this, we have carried out a study to identify and analyse the conceptual metaphors used to explain and describe the difficulties the EU's currency – the euro – has faced. Our study focuses on the corpus approaches to metaphor analysis. Therefore, we have compiled two corpora. The first corpus consists of English economic and financial articles, which were selected from those published in the English journal The Economist, from February 2012 to February 2013. The second corpus consists of the translated versions of all the English articles in the first corpus.

Keywords: conceptual metaphors; metaphorical expressions; corpus analysis; (un)translatability.

1.Different approaches to the study of metaphor

Traditionally, metaphors were believed to be related to literary or poetic language, in reality, metaphors are widely used in everyday language such as journalism, professional discourse, scientific language, and daily discourse.

Although they have been acknowledged as an important part of language use since the time of Aristotle and a lot of research has been carried on their production and use, there are still many controversial aspects related to them and many questions that have not been answered yet. This is why it is so difficult to give a clear definition. According to the aspects considered and studied, scholars from all over the world have come up with different approaches, and thus with different definitions.

Some scholars (Richards 1965) regard metaphor as a merely decorative device, without any practical purpose and that can easily be replaced with a literal paraphrase without any loss of meaning, only a loss of style. On the contrary, others (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980) state that metaphors as found in text and speech are manifestations of underlying conceptual structures (conceptual metaphors) in our minds and that they are necessary for us to be able to comprehend and relate to abstract concepts in the world around us. It is worth noting that these are only two of the contrastive views on metaphor.

Initially, Lakoff and Johnson (1980) recognized that metaphor is not only a cognitive concept, but also a cultural one, since their use provides some insight in the way we perceive the world surrounding us, and consequently the culture we live in. However, in their later research, this aspect is omitted, as Koller (2004) ironically observes. Over the years, cognitive linguists have noticed and analysed the universality of many conceptual

[1] Assistant, "Petru Maior" University of Târgu-Mureș, PhD candidate, "Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University of Iași

BDD-A6515 © 2014 Universitatea Petru Maior
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 03:00:23 UTC)

metaphors (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980). As some metaphors seem to be shared across very different cultures and may perhaps be considered universal, others are closely related and limited to the culture in which they are used. However, recent studies have indicated that, although one can identify universal conceptual metaphors at a generic level, when these are analysed at a specific level, the metaphorical expressions used may follow a variety of different patterns (Kövecses, 2005).

Such universal – variation issues can pose problems for the translator, who aims to be as true as possible to the source text (ST) without compromising the authenticity of target language (TL) use.

Within the study of metaphor, the language of economics and finance has received considerable attention over the last years. A lot of studies have attempted to prove the existence of metaphors in economic and financial texts, thus their presence cannot be denied.

The ubiquity of metaphors in economic and financial discourse makes these specialised languages less abstract and more understandable, structuring and even humanizing economic and financial concepts. Therefore, the task of translating metaphors from one language (SL) into another language (TL) effectively to enable readers to get an accurate insight into their meanings proves to be, most of the times, a challenge. Nonetheless, translating a text from a language into another is a difficult task because translators have to deal with linguistic, literary and aesthetic, and socio-cultural issues. Thus, these impediments cannot be overcome if translators do not have suitable translation methods.

2.Strategies for metaphor translation

When dealing with the translation of specialised language in the field of economics and finance, Romanian translators are faced with a huge challenge. One of the reasons is the fact that the Romanian economic and financial system is relatively young, as it started to develop after the 1989 Revolution, when it adopted the capitalist trend, and with it most of the concepts and specialised language.

Since metaphors have proved to be pervasive to this specialised language, our aim is to provide some insight into the translation of metaphors conceptualising the EU's currency – the euro.

As acknowledged by many authors, most of the times, it is difficult to retain the image in the ST in the TT. Therefore, several translation procedures have been advanced as alternative solutions.

Van den Broeck (1981: 77) identifies the following procedures:

1. Translation 'sensu stricto' – transfer of both SL tenor and SL vehicle into TL.
2. Substitution – replacement of SL vehicle by a different TL vehicle with more or less the same tenor.
3. Paraphrase – rendering a SL metaphor by a non-metaphorical expression in the TL.

BDD-A6515 © 2014 Universitatea Petru Maior
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 03:00:23 UTC)

Following the descriptive approach to Translation Studies, van den Broeck considers that a translation theory should not prescribe how metaphors need to be translated, but rather describe and present identified solutions. Therefore, he suggests that detailed descriptive studies of how metaphors are actually translated are needed to test the procedures he advanced.

On the contrary, Newmark follows the prescriptive approach, without providing empirical evidence in his methodology, and gives a list of recommendations for metaphor translations, which are based on his metaphor classification (Newmark 1981, 1988). He distinguishes between five metaphor categories: dead, cliché, stock, recent, and original (Newmark 1981: 85). Newmark's list of recommended translation procedures is presented below, as follows:

1) Reproducing the same image in the TL, provided the image has comparable frequency and currency in the appropriate register;

2) The translator may replace the image in the SL with a standard TL image which does not clash with the TL culture;

3) Translation of metaphor by simile, retaining the image. In Newmark's view, the shock of the metaphor can be modified by this procedure;

4) translation of a metaphor (or simile) by simile plus sense. Although, this procedure is seen by Newmark as a compromise solution to comprehension problems, he acknowledges that it leads to a loss of the intended effect.

5) Conversion of metaphor to sense. Newmark recommends the use of this procedure when the TL image is too broad in sense or not appropriate to the register.

6) Deletion, in case the metaphor is redundant.

7) Using the same metaphor, combined with sense for enforcing the image.

Studying the procedures, Schäffner concludes that "Newmark's focus is on the linguistic systems, and his arguments can be linked to the substitution theory of metaphor." (2004: 1257).

It is worth mentioning that these procedures are arranged according to preference. Thus, Newmark suggests translators to opt for the replacement procedure first, and only if this is not possible (because of cultural clashes), to move on to the next as an alternative procedure.

Toury (1995: 81) highlights that all these procedures were recommended by focusing on the metaphor as identified in the ST. Thus, he suggests two more strategies based on the perspective of the TT. These are as follows:

- Non-metaphor into metaphor. Using a metaphor in the TT for a non-metaphorical expression in the ST, and
- Zero into metaphor. Adding a metaphor in the TT without any linguistic motivation in the ST.

According to Toury, focusing on a TT-oriented approach in descriptive metaphor translation studies offers the researcher a better approach for understanding the translator's decision-making process. Following Toury's idea, Samaniego et al. (2005)

BDD-A6515 © 2014 Universitatea Petru Maior
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 03:00:23 UTC)

appreciate the TT-oriented approach because it provides a "more open and realistic approach to equivalence" (2005: 63).

Cristofoli et al. (1998: 178) suggest that a novel metaphor should be translated with a novel metaphor, whereas a conventional metaphor with a conventional metaphor. However, they do not provide a detailed explanation on the reasons for the use of these strategies.

Schäffner (2004, 2012) argues that the cognitive approach to metaphor can contribute and provide new insights into translation (2004: 1257). According to her

> "Establishing the conceptualization on which a particular metaphorical expression is based is relevant to translation, too. Such a perspective provides a different answer to the question of the translatability of metaphors. Translatability is no longer a question of the individual metaphorical expression, as identified in the ST, but it becomes linked to the level of conceptual systems in source and target culture." (2004: 1258)

In her cognitive analysis of examples of metaphor translation taken from political speech, she notes that "not all individual manifestations of a conceptual metaphor in a source text" are projected in the target text "by using the same metaphorical expressions." (2004: 1261). Moreover, in some of her examples, although the metaphorical expressions in both ST and TT belong to the same conceptual metaphor, the additional information that is provided in the TT is "seen as elaborating on this metaphor" (2004: 1261).

According to Schäffner, the analysis and translation of metaphors based on the conceptual perspective provides a reinterpretation of Newmark's recommended translation procedures (2012: 266). However, she recognizes that more empirical studies are needed before being able to identify clear translation strategies based on the conceptual metaphor theory and before new categorisations are advanced.

3.Corpus analysis and discussion

In order to carry out our research, first we compiled a corpus of 20 English articles taken from *The Economist*. Our selection criteria were related to the content of these articles (their topic focuses on economic and financial issues related to the EU's currency – the euro) and to the fact that these articles were translated into Romanian by a specialized journal – *Capital*. Thus, a second corpus was compiled containing the translated version of the English articles.

The analysis of the two corpora was carried out in two stages. In an initial stage of our research, a computer software – *WordSmith Tools* version 6.0 was particularly helpful for the identification of all the metaphorical expressions in the English corpus that conceptualise the EU's currency.

In order to analyse the English corpus, we used *Wordsmith* in two ways, according to its respective functions. Firstly, we used the *Wordlist* tool to generate a frequency list, which arranges all the words in the corpus in order of frequency and the number of times they appear. Secondly, we used the *Concord* tool to find all the examples of the word 'euro'

BDD-A6515 © 2014 Universitatea Petru Maior
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 03:00:23 UTC)

in the corpus and show them in concordance lines. This tool was particularly helpful for seeing how the word is used in context, identifying common collocations and establishing whether the expressions that refer to the EU's currency have a general or metaphorical meaning.

At this stage, we identified 62 metaphorical expressions. Then, these metaphorical expressions were classified according to the source domain they belong to: human being/person (37); building (10); machine (5) and the remaining 10 posed some problems, as it was difficult to attribute them with certainty to a particular source domain.

Furthermore, the qualitative analysis of the identified metaphorical expressions helped us to describe and establish connections between the metaphorical mappings generated by each source domain. It is worth mentioning that all identified metaphorical expressions have a negative connotation. This is explained by the fact that all of them present the euro as affected by the economic and financial crisis.

The second stage focused on an analysis of the second corpus, which contains the translations into Romanian of the English articles. At this point of the research, the Wordsmith tools were used mainly for the quantitative analysis and for finding collocations. In order to find the translations of the metaphorical expressions identified in the English corpus we had no other option than to look for them manually in the Romanian corpus.

A preliminary quantitative analysis of the two corpora reveals that the Romanian corpus is slightly bigger. It contains approximately 550 words more than the English corpus.

As for the qualitative analysis, our aim has been to determine to what extent the metaphorical expressions identified in the English corpus are translatable into Romanian. An initial analysis reveals that there is a connexion between the type of metaphor and the strategy used to translate it.

In the case of the highly conventional metaphors, the same metaphorical meaning is usually kept. However, there are examples in which a more elaborate explanation is provided or a different metaphorical image is induced, changing one conceptual metaphor used in English with a different one in Romanian.

When more original or novel metaphors are used in English, the predominant translation strategy is providing an explanation without any metaphorical meaning, or deleting the metaphorical expression.

A presentation of each of these source domains together with its metaphorical mappings and translations into Romanian is provided below.

3.1.The Euro Is A Human Being/Person

This metaphor is an ontological one, as it makes use of our existence and physical experiences to enable readers to better comprehend the concept of European currency. We all know what the stages of life are and how to overcome common problems or challenges we all share. Therefore, it makes sense that this conceptual metaphor produced

BDD-A6515 © 2014 Universitatea Petru Maior
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 03:00:23 UTC)

the largest number of metaphorical expressions which generate the following metaphorical mappings:

- The introduction of the euro on the financial markets corresponds to the birth of a person

e.g. "Unemployment in the troubled euro zone is at its highest since *the single currency's birth*; in Germany it is at a record low."

However, the translated version induces a different metaphorical image – "În tulburata zonă euro, şomajul a atins valori-record de la *lansarea monedei unice* şi până acum; în schimb, Berlinul raportează cel mai mic şomaj din istorie."

- The creators of the euro correspond to a person's parents

e.g. "Had *its [euro's] fathers* foreseen turmoil, they might never have embarked on currency union"

In this case, the source domain of person is changed into the source domain of building, in the translated version – "Cu siguranţă, dacă ar fi prevăzut măcar parţial haosul de azi, *fondatorii săi* s-ar fi gândit de mai multe ori înainte de a avea această iniţiativă."

- The evolution of the euro is the fate of a person

e.g. "*The fate of the euro* will depend as much on the choices of creditor states, above all Germany."

The translated version keeps the same metaphorical expression – "*Destinul monedei unice* va depinde şi de deciziile luate de statele-creditor, în frunte cu Germania."

- Maintaining the European currency implies taking some financial measures and this corresponds to the survival of a person who needs to be applied some kind of treatment

e.g. "*The euro has survived* 2012, but it will be a long time before *it is cured*"

The metaphorical expression of survival is maintained in the process of translation as this is rather conventional in both languages, whereas the other metaphorical expression turns into an explanation and loses the metaphorical dimension it has in English – "*Euro a supravieţuit* dramelor din ultimii ani, însă *are nevoie de tot mai mult sprijin*."

3.2.*The Euro Is a Building*

Most of the metaphorical expressions, which instantiate this metaphor, refer to the hypothetical situation of the euro's disappearance as the collapse of a building. As this metaphorical expression is conventional in both languages, the Romanian translated versions keep the same metaphorical dimension.

e.g. "*The currency has not collapsed.*" / "*moneda unică nu s-a prăbuşit*";

"*...a partial or total collapse of the euro.*" / "*colapsul parţial sau total al monedei europene.*"

In the following example, the measures taken to stabilise the euro correspond to efforts made to prevent a building from falling down. The author uses the source domain of building in English, however, this changes to the source domain of person in the process of translation:

BDD-A6515 © 2014 Universitatea Petru Maior
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 03:00:23 UTC)

e.g. "To these familiar concerns is added a newish one: that *efforts to shore up the euro* might be scotched not in Berlin but in another austerity-minded northern capital: Helsinki."

"Probleme deja vechi, la care se mai adaugă însă una nouă: *eforturile de salvare a monedei euro* s-ar putea lovi de un zid greu de trecut. Nu al Berlinului, ci al altei capitale nordice atașate de principiile austerității - Helsinki."

For the following example, which is a more original or novel metaphorical expression in English, no translation was provided as the translator decided to delete the metaphor completely:

e.g. "*to boost the euro's firewall* to "€800 billion".

3.3.*The Euro Is A Machine*

As aforementioned, all metaphorical expressions have a negative connotation. Therefore, the euro is conceptualised as a machine that is broken and has to be repaired:

e.g. "...a big treaty change *to re-engineer the euro.*" / "...a tratatului european, care *să ducă la restructurarea uniunii monetare.*"

In the following example, the translator has decided to replace the source domain of machine with the source domain of building:

e.g. "On November 28th the European Commission proposed *a step-by-step blueprint to fix the underlying flaws of the euro.*"

"Pe 28 noiembrie, Comisia a propus *un plan treptat pentru reconsolidarea monedei unice.*"

The ten metaphorical expressions that were difficult to classify with certainty are used for showing problems in the euro zone and the threat that the euro might disappear – "*break-up of the euro*" or "*euro break-up*". There is only one expression with a similar meaning in English, namely, "a euro split". For translating "euro break-up", the Romanian translators have used a variety of words, such as "*colaps, prăbușire, dezbinare, dispariție, ruptură, destrămare*". Thus, such a variety proves that there is little consensus on how to translate the metaphorical expression illustrating this financial phenomenon. This might be explained by the fact that it is difficult to determine which source domain the author had in mind when using this metaphorical expression. Moreover, it is also necessary to take into consideration the conceptual metaphors extensively used initially, once the European Union was created and later when the single currency was introduced:

- THE EUROPEAN UNION IS A MARRIAGE
- THE EUROPEAN UNION/THE EURO IS A SOLID BUILDING/ CONSTRUCTION

4.Conclusions

The examples analysed indicate that the process of translating metaphors is indeed a complex one. The translator' task is even more difficult when metaphors are part of a specialised language, as it is the language of finance and economics. The analysis carried out based on the metaphorical expressions in both corpora reveals that the different types

BDD-A6515 © 2014 Universitatea Petru Maior
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 03:00:23 UTC)

of conceptual metaphor used in English have forced translators to use different translation strategies.

A clear observation is that English uses a variety of metaphorical expressions conceptualising the EU's currency, thus making translators' job, if not difficult, at least challenging. Moreover, this entire metaphorical setting, besides being adapted to the target language, a strategy acceptable in our opinion, is also reduced by means of the explanations provided or deletion.

Bibliography

Cristofoli, M., G. Dyrberg and L. Stage. (1998). *Metaphor, meaning and translation*. (Hermes*)*. 165-179.

Kirby, John T. (1997). "Aristotle on Metaphor" (1997). Classics Articles and Papers. Paper *2*.

Koller, Veronika. (2004). *Metaphor and gender in business media discourse: A critical cognitive study*. Hampshire, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.

Kövecses, Zoltán. (2010). *Metaphor. A practical introduction*. 2nd ed. New York: Oxford University Press.

Lakoff, G. & M. Turner. (1980). *Metaphors we live by*. Chicago: Chicago University Press.

Lakoff, G. (1993). The contemporary theory of metaphor. In A. Ortony (ed.), *Metaphor and Thought*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. pp. 202-250.

Newmark, Peter. (1985). *The Translation of Metaphor,* in Paprotté and Dirven, eds, *The Ubiquity of Metaphor*. Amsterdam: Benjamins.

Newmark, Peter. (1988). *Approaches to Translation*, Cambridge: Prentice Hall.

Richards, I. A. (1936). *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*. Oxford, Oxford University Press.

Samaniego Fernánd ez, E., M. Velasco Sacristán and P. A. Fuertes Olivera. (2005). "Translations we live by: The impact of metaphor translation on target systems." in P. A. Fuertes Olivera (ed.). *Lengua y Sociedad: Investigaciones recientes en Lingüística Aplicada*. Valladolid: University of Valladolid. 61-81.

Schäffner, Christina. (2004). "Metaphor and translation: some implications of a cognitive approach", in *Journal of Pragmatics* 36, 1253–1269.

Schäffner, Christina. (2012). "Finding space under the umbrella: The Euro crisis, metaphors, and translation", in *The Journal of Specialised Translation* 17, 250 – 270.

Toury, G. (1995). *Descriptive translation studies and beyond*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Van den Broeck, R. (1981). "The limits of translatability exemplified by metaphor translation." in *Poetics Today* 2 (4): 73-87.

BDD-A6515 © 2014 Universitatea Petru Maior
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 03:00:23 UTC)