

METAPHORICAL WORDING IN REPORTING SOCIAL ISSUES - A FUNCTIONAL APPROACH

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Abstract. *In Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) the discussion of metaphor goes further from lexical variation in meaning. With metaphorical expressions the variation is lexicogrammatical rather than merely lexical, since rhetorical transference in most cases involves not only selection of words with changes in their meaning, but also changes in syntactic and semantic functions of clause elements. Grammatical metaphor is crucial in SFG as far as metaphorical mode of expression is concerned, and the so called incongruent (metaphorical) structures are considered noteworthy in written English. The paper discusses transitivity metaphors, but first addresses the notions of grammatical metaphor, clause and wording as explained in SFG. The evidence of metaphorical expressions is then provided through examples from English textual variety of journalism, and these are further interpreted regarding their syntactic and functional components.*

Key words: *grammatical metaphor, transference, clause, wording, congruent/incongruent*

1. INTRODUCTION: THE PROBLEM AND ITS THEORETICAL CONTEXT

Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) has dissociated itself from viewing metaphors as simple lexical transference of meaning. The literature puts the accent on the grammatical aspect of the variation, which is considered a significant element in rhetorical transference (Halliday 1985). Grammatical metaphor often involves lexical variation, which, however, is not functionally dominant, as certain metaphorical expressions may be interpreted in terms of grammar as an efficient instrument for achieving variation in meaning.

Principally, metaphors are practically possible to account for by relational processes, specifically of the intensive type. There are two modes to the type – attributive and identifying. In the former an entity is assigned a quality by a qualitative Attribute. Two elements of the structure are hence defined as Carrier and Attribute. For example, the clause reading *The baby's skin feels smooth* is analyzed into the following functional elements:

Table 1

<i>The baby's skin</i>	<i>feels</i>	<i>smooth</i>
Participant/Carrier	Process	Attribute

In the identifying mode, the relationship involves two entities, one used to identify the other. The elements of the related grammatical structure are the Identified and the Identifier, which have the functions of Token and Value respectively. The Identifier serves to determine characteristics of the Identified either by indicating its form or function according to how the entity is perceived or valued. Any identifying clause is composed of two functional elements, each of which can operate as Identifier, depending on the word order, specifically the position occupied by the Subject, as for example:

Table 2

<i>He</i>	<i>has become</i>	<i>a monarch</i>
Identified/Token	Process	Identifier/Value

Although relational processes of the intensive type, involving relationships between elements based on sameness, may seem to be a substance to metaphor, they are not self-sufficient to account for the transferences in expressions involving grammatical metaphor. In the interpretation SFG goes beyond similarity criteria on which metaphor is essentially based, and deals further with structural and functional changes in clause elements. Metaphorical expressions are now viewed not only as an imaginative way of describing something by referring to something else that has similar qualities, but as a grammatical/functional variation in clause structure as a linguistic representation of experience involving other process types, as will be shown below.

Any expression entails a semantic configuration sustained by the syntactic elements. In Halliday (1985: 321) it is held that it is possible to express a semantic configuration in literal/congruent/non-metaphorical or incongruent/metaphorical form. The forms are not mutually exclusive, yet they do not appear at the same time in a text. The selection of metaphor, moreover, is considered to add additional information to the semantic content, the non-metaphorical form being synonymous to an extent. In addition, metaphorical wording contributes largely to the stylistic quality of the text, and metaphors are typical of written rather than spoken language. It is assumed that metaphorical wording feeds the complexity of writing; on the other hand, in speech there is a tendency towards simplicity and, consequently, metaphorical wording is avoided.

Structurally, the instances of grammatical metaphor support the idea that there is no one-to-one correspondence between semantic and syntactic functions of elements in a clause, which is encouraged in Downing & Locke (2002). This is to say that typical correspondences are employed in congruent structures, where people and things are expressed by nouns, processes by verbs and qualities by adjectives. The contrast between congruent and incongruent expressions develops along these lines: in congruent expressions semantic roles match typical syntactic functions in the clause, whereas in metaphorical expressions, as 'marked' linguistic representations of experience, such correspondences are not followed.

The uncertainty which may arise as to whether congruent structures are more precise and meaningful than incongruent ones should be settled by avoiding absolute terms when discussing metaphorical expressions, as suggested in Thompson (1996). Thus, grammati-

cal metaphor is a matter of degree determined with reference to wording as more or less metaphorical in comparison to other expressions conveying the same meaning (Thompson 1996: 165). Apparently, wording is a constructive notion in this subject matter since it indicates not only the sum of words and phrases used in an expression but also the way in which these are structured in a clause to conceptualize experience. Metaphorical wording is not unnatural, but only less usual in everyday language, yet fairly regular within different textual varieties. The choice of words in a congruent expression and its metaphorical equivalent may be virtually identical, but the structuring of these elements ranges from grammatically typical to less typical as the semantic roles and syntactic functions are readjusted in the latter.

2. CLAUSE AS THE CARRIER OF MEANING

The focal point in SFG is the clause, and all semantic and syntactic aspects of language observed and described are within or beyond it. Linguistic discussion and research on the realization of meaning within the functional framework has raised the semantic value of the clause above all other units. In Bateman (2000: 195) it is stated that SFG regards the construction of the clause as a support for our natural interpretation of experience, through which that and other experiences gain meaning. The grammar as structured in the clause actually provides access to semantics, and, consequently, is the means by which we generalize over our experience (Bateman 2000: 195). In SFG the semantic content is explained through formal constituents of the clause, the clause being the principal linguistic realization and representation of experience. It is only by looking at the structure of the clause that it is possible to discover how semantic features are represented in grammar (Halliday 1985: 21). Also, it is the clause which demonstrates variations in syntactic functions and semantic roles of lower units.

The issue of grammatical metaphor is closely linked with the ideational function of the clause. The unit functions as a representation of a process, which underlines its grammatical significance in expressing our conception of reality (Halliday 1985: 101). In such a grammatical function the clause conveys the experiential aspect of meaning, which is a component of the system of transitivity.

As stated in Halliday (1985), any process within a clause consists of three elements, i.e. a) the process itself, b) participants in the process, and c) circumstances associated with the process. Grammatically speaking, the three concepts, as three semantic categories, are represented by linguistic structures referring to actual experience. The realization of a clause in its ideational function involves the selection of process type and transitivity functions which realise the process, participants and circumstances, which are typically structured as verbal group, nominal group and prepositional group respectively. In SFG this order of steps is held to be systematic in realizing a meaning through formulating the wording. Accordingly, the clause *The referee tossed a coin in the air* is classified into the following semantic categories:

Table 3

<i>The referee</i>	<i>tossed</i>	<i>a coin</i>	<i>in the air</i>
Participant	Process	Participant	Circumstance

The three categories are general, and the interpretation of the grammar of a particular clause demands further specification of functions according to process types, which are material, mental, relational, behavioural, verbal and existential. The example above is of material process type, with the elements further categorised as

Table 4

<i>The referee</i>	<i>tossed</i>	<i>a coin</i>	<i>in the air</i>
Actor	Material process	Goal	Circumstance

The example may be said to typify the usual structuring of clauses representing material processes, i.e. the processes of doing, with the Participant/Actor in the position of syntactic Subject realised by a nominal group (*the referee*) and the process realised by a verbal group (*tossed*). Goal, typically realised by a nominal group, is not an obligatory element except when the verb is transitive, as this is the case. Circumstance is optional as well, and is realised by an adverbial or prepositional group.

3. INTERPRETATION OF IDEATIONAL METAPHORS

The reference to typical syntactic realizations of semantic categories is significant when discussing grammatical metaphor. Clauses can be structured atypically to result in metaphorical wording, which reads less literally, yet effectively expresses the experiential aspect of meaning. The representation of experience in a metaphorical form is characterized by transference which is explained as the process in which "the semantic functions are 'transferred' in relation to the syntactic functions" (Downing & Locke 2002: 148). As illustrated in Downing & Locke 2002, the congruent expression *We walked in the evening along the river to Henley* may be put into metaphorical wording reading *Our evening walk along the river took us to Henley*, where the material process *walk* has become Actor (Subject), and the former Subject *we* now functions as Affected (Direct Object).

The interpretation of metaphorical forms should basically follow the procedure in which the variation in the grammar of a clause is made clear by specifying the function of each element and, preferably, by contrasting it to the 'unmarked' way of articulating the same idea. As proposed in Halliday (1985: 325), the analysis should be directed towards matching functional elements of both the metaphorical expression and its suggested congruent rewording as closely as possible, so as to (i) reveal contrast in grammatical functions, (ii) show if there is a lexical metaphor, and (iii) indicate reasons for the use of the metaphorical form.

3.1 Evidence from English

As mentioned above, the evidence of grammatical metaphor is most likely to be found in written language, in this case English. Professional registers, primarily those of journalism and business, are major sources of metaphorical expressions. This paper will present journalistic examples and analyse them as outlined in Halliday (1985: 325). Also, it is crucial to say that the analysis also relies upon the conclusion postulated in Downing & Locke (2002) that the most consistently recognised form of grammatical metaphor is nominalization. Metaphorical expressions demonstrate a high concentration of nominal

groups with noticeable transfer in semantic functions. The illustrations in point, classified on the basis of most common types of variation, are the following¹:

a) Circumstantial Subject

1. *Almost every store on Al Jazair Street in this southern Iraqi city sells mobile telephones.*

Table a (1)

<i>In Almost every store on Al Jazair Street in this southern Iraqi city</i>	<i>they</i>	<i>sell</i>	<i>mobile telephones.</i>
Locative Circumstance	Actor	Material process	Goal
<i>Almost every store on Al Jazair Street in this southern Iraqi city</i>		<i>sells</i>	<i>mobile telephones.</i>
Actor		Material process	Goal

This is a material process clause, with the verb (*sell*) designating the process of doing as the Predicator. In the incongruent variant the semantic function of a prepositional group, i.e. locative Circumstance, has been transferred to Participant/Actor in the position of syntactic Subject. The Circumstance is realised as Thing, functioning as Subject with spatial meaning. There is no evidence of lexical metaphor, and the verb represents material process as a physical event in both expressions.

2. *New regions are reaping the benefits of improved agricultural practices.*

Table a (2)

<i>In new regions</i>	<i>people</i>	<i>have benefited from</i>	<i>improved agricultural practices.</i>
Locative Circumstance	Actor	Material process	Source
<i>New regions</i>		<i>are reaping</i>	<i>the benefits of improved agricultural practices.</i>
Actor		Material process	Goal

With this transitivity metaphor, again, locative Circumstance is transferred to the function of Actor. In the congruent expression, the Prepositional Object *improved agricultural practices* is related to the verb by the preposition *from*. The metaphorical variant involves the expansion of the Object, which is now direct and includes the former Process transferred to Goal realised by a nominal group. Lexical metaphor is introduced by an abstract material process (*reap*), with the connotative meaning TO GET A GOOD RESULT FROM. This particular lexical metaphor is part of the language system, institutionalized and therefore unmarked.

3. *Our own era partakes more of the Victorian's passion for 'restoration'.*

Table a (3)

<i>In our own era</i>	<i>we</i>	<i>feel</i>	<i>the Victorian's passion for 'restoration'.</i>
Temporal Circumstance	Senser	Mental process	Phenomenon
<i>Our own era</i>		<i>partakes of</i>	<i>the Victorian's passion for 'restoration'</i>
Token		Relational process	Value

¹ The examples adapted from *The Daily Telegraph*, *Daily Mail*, *Newsweek* and *Chicago Tribune*.

In the metaphorical expression, which comprises a relational process, the Token, which is a syntactic Subject, derives from temporal Circumstance. Omitting the preposition as a feature of a prepositional group, the group shifted in form to a nominal group occupying the position of syntactic Subject, as in the examples above. The congruent rewording does not necessarily involve relocation of a group, especially in the case of temporal and spatial Circumstances, since they may occupy initial positions in clauses, which also simplifies the contrasting of expressions in this particular analysis. The transference of Circumstance to Participant has the effect of addressing all aspects of the relevant entity/concept, avoiding a somewhat indefinite reference of pronouns such as *we*.

b) Process as Participant

1. *American insistence on this exception invites other nations to craft their own loopholes.*

Table b (1)

<i>America</i>	<i>insists on</i>	<i>this exception,</i>	<i>which invites other nations to craft their own loopholes.</i>
Actor	Material process	Goal	Elaborating Circumstantial
<i>American insistence on this exception</i>	<i>invites</i>	<i>other nations</i>	<i>to craft their loopholes</i>
Actor	Material process	Goal	(Predicator Complement)

This example illustrates the conceptualisation of a process as Thing, in which case it functions as Actor of a material process clause and, with necessary morphological changes, takes the form of a nominal group and the position of Subject. Typically, processes are realised by verbal groups, which clarifies the transference of this particular semantic function in this instance. The congruent expression may seem less straightforward since the information contained in the relative clause is only elaborating the idea, whereas in the metaphorical expression the Process as Actor directly acts upon the Goal which is now the Direct Object in the primary and not secondary clause.

2. *The president's silence is a surrender to the military.*

Table b (2)

<i>The president</i>	<i>surrendered</i>	<i>to the military</i>	<i>through his silence.</i>
Actor	Material process	Circumstance	Circumstance
<i>The president's silence</i>	<i>is</i>	<i>a surrender to the military.</i>	
Token	Relational process	Value	

The process is again realised as Thing and functions as Value of a relational process clause. This is an identifying clause in which the Token is identified through Value, with the objective to explain how the Token is experienced. Seemingly, by transferring the Process to Value, the focus within the message is placed on this element as it clearly defines the Subject. *The president's silence* is equated with *surrender* in this state of affair and openly valued as such. As Subject Complement the Value completes the conception of the Token by indicating how its identity and meaning are regarded. The unambiguousness of the message is achieved through the structure of the relational clause where "*x/Token is a/Value*".

c) Situation as Participant

1. *Disagreement over what the Bible says about gay sex has created rifts in Protestant denominations for years.*

Table c (1)

<i>Because Protestants disagree on what the Bible says about gay sex,</i>	<i>there</i>	<i>have been</i>	<i>rifts</i>	<i>in Protestant denominations</i>	<i>for years.</i>
Dependent Circumstantial: Reason		Existential process	Existent	Circumstance	Circumstance
<i>Disagreement over what the Bible says about gay sex</i>		<i>has created</i>	<i>rifts</i>	<i>in Protestant denominations</i>	<i>for years.</i>
Actor		Material process	Effected	Circumstance	Circumstance

In this example a situation which would otherwise be realised as an enhancing clause (Dependent Circumstantial) in a congruent expression has the function of Actor of a material process. Through nominalization the process functions as Participant so as to highlight the main factor which has produced a certain result. The result is represented by Resulting Object functioning as Effected. The metaphorical form, in which the splitting of the sentence into primary and secondary clause is avoided, clearly indicates that the Effected has been directly provoked by the Actor.

2. *The July 7 bombings prompted the British government to propose new antiterrorism laws.*

Table c (2)

<i>The British government</i>	<i>decided</i>	<i>to propose new antiterrorism laws</i>	<i>after bombings took place on July 7.</i>
Actor	Material process	(Predicator Complement)	Dependent Circumstantial: Time
<i>The July 7 bombings</i>	<i>prompted</i>	<i>the British government</i>	<i>to propose new antiterrorism laws.</i>
Actor	Material process	Affected	(Predicator Complement)

The conclusions as under c (1) are applicable to this example as well. The position of Subject is here occupied by a situation which may be congruently realised by an enhancing temporal clause functioning as Dependent Circumstantial. Another term for the Goal applicable here is Affected, which implies that the Actor has had unquestionable influence upon this element.

d) Attributive Subject

1. *Stubbornness is a major part of what brought both Arafat and Netanyahu to power.*

Table d (1)

<i>Both Arafat and Netanyahu</i>	<i>came to power</i>	<i>because</i>	<i>they</i>	<i>were</i>	<i>stubborn.</i>
Actor	Material process	Conjunction	Carrier	Relational process	Attribute
<i>Stubbornness</i>	<i>is</i>	<i>a major part of what brought both Arafat and Netanyahu to power.</i>			
Value	Relational process	Token			

For the purpose of intensifying the importance of the quality, the Attribute form the enhancing clause functioning as Dependent Circumstantial in the congruent instance has undergone the process of nominalization and functions as Value in the metaphorical clause. The two elements are morphologically related, *stubbornness* stemming from the form *stubborn*. In the metaphorical clause the focus is placed on the quality by conceptualising it in an abstract noun, now the syntactic Subject. By placing the derived noun in the position of Subject, the quality has been pushed into the foreground of the message.

4. DISCUSSION

In the analysis above it is rightly assumed that every examined example does offer a congruent option. Congruent counterparts are not ultimate as they may be formulated through other wordings. Following Halliday (1985: 325), the non-metaphorical pairs are provided to be compared to the metaphorical illustrations to reveal variations in grammatical and semantic functions. Congruent expressions are, thus, purposeful rewordings of the incongruent ones. Their purpose is to demonstrate typical semantic roles and functions of syntactic elements when there is no rhetorical transference. This procedure highlights the grammatical metaphor in the studied examples, in which certain syntactic elements have been relocated, with some modifications, to other positions and functions.

The analysis is not performed to great detail with some constituents of the clauses, such as dependent clauses, the emphasis being on their function rather than structure. Functional variations are observable with the following categories:

- Circumstances realised by prepositional groups transferred to Participant (Actor) realised by nominal group in the position of syntactic Subject as in a(1), a(2) and a(3);
- Processes realised by verbal groups transferred to Participant, realised by nominal group in the position of syntactic Subject (Actor) as in b(1), and realised by nominal group in the position of Subject Complement (Value) as in b(2);
- Dependent Circumstantials realised by dependent clauses transferred to Participant (Actor) realised by nominal group in the position of syntactic Subject as in c(1) and c(2);
- Attribute realised by adjectival group transferred to Participant (Value) realised by nominal group in the position of syntactic Subject as in d(1).

This course of transference provokes other necessary variations within the sentences depending on the process type, for instance:

- in a(2) the Process realised by verbal group is transferred to Goal in the position of Direct Object realised by nominal group;
- in b(2) the Circumstance of the material process is relocated to the position of Subject functioning as Token of the relational process;
- in c(1) the Existent of the existential process in the position of notional Subject has been assigned the function of Effected of the material process in the position of Direct Object without formal modifications.

In the examples lexical metaphor is a rare occurrence, which further stresses the significance of grammatical metaphor.

The considered examples from the English language have been taken from journalistic texts as they offer the best potential for examining grammatical metaphor. The linguistic lit-

erature points out that certain professional registers are rich in metaphorical clauses, which highlights the importance of written language as a major source of rhetorical transference. On the contrary, the language of everyday communication is characterised by simplicity since communicators strive towards precision and transparency of their messages. The experience is thus quite rarely conceptualised in metaphorical expressions and standard grammatical structuring is its main feature. Congruent expressions are habitually produced, without transferring semantic categories to atypical roles. On the other hand, a textual variety such as journalese regularly features metaphorical wording as a stylistically marked method of conceptualizing experience. These incongruent structures do not seem to lack a point as they are used with specific stylistic or informative purposes.

Most frequent transference of categories is to the function of Participant in the position of syntactic Subject. It may be assumed that initial structures in a clause arouse main concern, which is the intention of reports indented for a wide readership. By relocating the essential part of a message to the position of Subject, the accent is placed on the most important aspect of experience. Clearly, the distinction between congruent and metaphorical expressions lies more in the emphasis they lay on certain aspects of experience than in their form and content, at least in journalistic texts. Linguistically speaking, what can be concluded from the examples is that nominalization is the major form of grammatical metaphor, as stated in Downing & Locke (2002: 149). It results in the density of nominals, which consequently call attention to entities or concepts regarded significant in our experience, which, presumably, is the objective of journalistic reports and comments dealing with social issues.

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METAFORIČNO FORMULISANJE U OPISIVANJU DRUŠTVENIH POJAVA – FUNKCIONALNI PRISTUP

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U Sistemsko-funkcionalnoj gramatici (SFG) rasprava o metafori ide dalje od promene u značenju reči. Kod metaforičnih izraza promene su leksičko-gramatičke pre nego samo leksičke, jer preneseni smisao uglavnom ne obuhvata samo izbor reči kod kojih je došlo do promena u značenju, već i promene u gramatičkim oblicima i funkciji elemenata rečenice. Gramatička metafora je značajna u SFG što se tiče metaforičnog tipa izražavanja, a takozvane nekongruentne (metaforične) strukture su zapažene u pisanom engleskom jeziku. Rad se bavi metaforama kojima se prikazuje ljudsko iskustvo, ali prvo razmatra pojmove gramatičke metafore, rečenice i formulisanja kako su oni opisani u SFG. Primeri metaforičnih izraza su dati iz novinskih tekstova na engleskom jeziku, koji se dalje analiziraju u pogledu njihovih semantičkih i sintaktičkih odlika.

Ključne reči: *gramatička metafora, prenošenje, rečenica, formulisanje, kongruentan/ nekongruentan*