The paper presents the results of a study devoted to the examination of students’ metaphoric competence. The participants received no preceding training, or structured metaphorical input. The study was based on The Economist’s climate change coverage, a film titled “Climate change technology: Is shading the earth too risky?”, which was a part of an English composition assignment. We transcribed the oral data and, following the MIPVU (Steen 2010), identified sentences which contained at least one lexical unit that was metaphorically used. The students were asked to complete a questionnaire that was organized in accordance with our research goals. Namely, our study tested the students’ ability to distinguish between metaphorical and literal meaning in order to check their intuitions about what constitutes a metaphor. They were also asked to translate the given sentences into Serbian so that we could examine how they deal with metaphor in translation. The results suggest that the differences in translation are caused by the availability of the conventionalized metaphorical senses across the SL and TL lexicon. The research offered insight into students’ metaphoric competence prior to any exposure to Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Lakoff, Johnson 1980), which could be contrasted with the results obtained after a structured metaphorical input.

Key words: metaphoric competence, metaphor identification, metaphor translation, Serbian EFL learners, Conceptual Metaphor Theory, news discourse

1. INTRODUCTION

Over the past several decades, metaphor scholarship has advanced significantly, so much so that the claim about the pervasive role of conceptual metaphor would probably be harder to dispute than to accept. The growing body of theoretical and empirical research, ranging from verbal (see Lakoff, Johnson 2003 [1980]; Kövecses 2000; Gibbs 2017) to non-verbal and multimodal discourse (see Forceville, Urios-Aparisi 2009; Forceville 2020; Tseronis, Forceville 2017; Navarro i Ferrando 2019), substantiates this claim. Since its ubiquity is no longer a controversial issue, recent analyses focus on other matters, such as genre or medium-specific man-
ifestations of metaphors (see Forceville, Urios-Aparisi 2009), the interaction between metaphor, register and word class (see Krennmayr 2011), or the functions of different metaphor types (e.g. Bogetić 2017). Yet, precisely because of its ubiquity and its potential to shape and represent ideologies (Goatly 2007), it is of the utmost importance that we continue to explore metaphor and develop *metaphoric competence*.

Metaphoric competence is a cognitive skill which involves metaphor comprehension, interpretation, and production, and it develops with age (Littlemore 2008: 295–296). Following Littlemore and Low (2006: 268), we use the term in a broad sense, i.e. “to include both knowledge of, and ability to use, metaphor”. Such skills, as noted by Littlemore (2010: 289), contribute to one’s grammatical, illocutionary, discourse, sociolinguistic, as well as strategic competence. In addition, it has been argued that metaphoric thinking presents a practice in which language learners engage more frequently than native speakers (Littlemore 2006: 272), which is why foreign language metaphoric competence development should receive more attention. The existing literature shows that vocabulary remains the “area most conducive to teaching items as metaphor in the language classroom” (Low 2008: 223). Our recent review (Janevska 2021) of the studies that question the relationship between metaphorical input and foreign language teaching process reveals that this is also true of Serbian educators. Another area of research that has attracted attention over the years is metaphor translation. Reflections on the interlingual translation of figurative language (see Eco 2014; Steen 2014; Kövecses 2014; Arduini 2014; Shuttleworth 2014) reveal that the differences between the source (ST) and target text (TT) can be attributed, in part, to the differences in cultural-ideological traits (Kövecses 2014: 32), the availability of conventionalized metaphorical senses across the source and target language lexicon, or the overall ST and TT discourse properties (Steen 2014: 12). The present study addresses the following question raised by Steen (ibid.: 16):

> If metaphors are not always recognised as metaphors by readers, that is, if metaphors do not always cause readers to set up cross-domain mappings in their minds, then not every metaphor in a ST requires a metaphor in a TT. In other words, some metaphors may be more metaphorical than others. Which metaphors might these be?

In a chapter on the impact of metaphor on teaching and learning process, Low (2008: 222) points out that, in terms of metaphoric competence, learner differences and the possible transfer of metaphor preferences across languages remain a largely unexplored territory (a point also made by Littlemore 2006). In fact, some attempts (see Johnson 1989; Littlemore 2010) have been made to explore the possible link between metaphor interpretation and production behavior in first and second language.

---

3 See Littlemore and Low (2006) for a more detailed discussion on the role of metaphor in communicative language ability.
Examining Serbian EFL Learners’ Metaphoric Competence: Metaphor Identification And Translation

These studies tend to compare metaphor interpretation abilities of native and non-native speakers. Yet, unlike previous studies (e.g. Littlemore 2010), we shall not focus on decontextualized novel linguistic expressions, nor the transfer of the metaphoric skills from one’s mother tongue to their second language. Rather, we observe one aspect of metaphoric competence in an EFL context (for the English–Serbian language pair), that is, the student’s ability to distinguish between literal and metaphorical meaning in the ST. Instead of focusing on how professional translators deal with metaphor (like Steen 2014), we explore how this is done by the third-year university students of English. We start by considering the issue of metaphor recognition, after which follow some remarks on metaphor translation. The paper ends with recommendations for future research.

2. DATA AND METHODOLOGY

The participants were 27 (22 female, 5 male) third-year university students of English studying at the University of Kragujevac. Before participating in the study, the students were informed that their participation was voluntary, and that the study would take place during class time. Since the focus of interest was on metaphor recognition by a lay audience, the fact that the participants received no preceding training was considered an advantage. Such a decision was motivated by our goal to explore whether learners were able to spot metaphor without explicit instructions, i.e. without being provided with the cognitive linguistic definition of metaphor.

The study was based on The Economist’s video on solar geoengineering, titled Climate change technology: Is shading the earth too risky?, which was discussed in an English composition class. This means that the students were familiar with the context surrounding the decontextualized sentences included in the questionnaire. The original material, presented in spoken mode, was transcribed for our purposes, and MIPVU (Steen et al. 2010) was applied to this text. Namely, for each lexical unit in the text, we established its contextual and basic meanings, and when the two were sufficiently distinct but the contextual meaning could be understood in comparison with the basic meaning, we marked that unit as a metaphor-related word (MRW). To illustrate, let us consider the expression worth in the following example: Is solar geoengineering worth the risk? The basic meaning4 of worth has to do with concrete entities that have a value in money, when applied to an action or a plan, such as solar geoengineering, it indicates that it is important and necessary because one could gain something from it. A plan, or an action, involves the use of resources which have monetary value and can be used up. In the like manner, the outcomes of our actions can be either favorable, or they can result in depletion of those

---

resources, which allows us to assess their worth. Hence, we marked this unit as a MRW. By applying the procedure, we were able to single out 21 sentences for our questionnaire. The number of metaphor-related words per sentence ranged from one to four lexical units. While most of them were indirectly used (indirect metaphor, as in: “As the debate heats up […]”), there were three examples in which the cross-domain mapping was expressed by direct language (direct metaphor, as in: “It would be like living underneath a hundred-ton boulder ready to fall at any time.”).

The study is based on the responses to a written questionnaire that had three segments (see Appendix). Firstly, the students were provided with a set of sentences and were asked to make a yes/no decision about their metaphoricity. We decided not to underline the metaphoric linguistic expressions to ensure that the students’ intuition would not be impaired by the explicit mention of the locus of metaphor. Instead, the first task was phrased as follows: “Judge whether the following sentences contain word/words that is/are used metaphorically”. The second task called on them to translate the given sentences into Serbian so that we could see if they would retain the metaphorical expression in the TT. The final task was designed to check their understanding of what the term metaphor means. For this reason, we asked the students to define the term in their own words. The placement of this task (at the very end) was deliberate, i.e. we wanted the students to lean on their intuition when deciding on metaphoricity, and then reflect on their understanding of the term. For reasons of space, the details concerning the last task will be discussed elsewhere. Since conceptual metaphor was not covered in courses that the students took at the time, we expected them to interpret metaphor as a poetic or rhetorical device. That is, we expected low recognition scores.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. METAPHOR RECOGNITION

Out of all metaphorically used words in the sentences, the lexical units in the indirect metaphor category belonged to four word classes, predominantly verbs (18 instances in total), followed by a small proportion of nouns and prepositions (5 instances each), and one adjective. Conversely, in the direct metaphor category, two instances of direct comparison were signaled5, i.e. the units that belong to the direct mapping were preceded by a word that functions as a signal of a cross-domain mapping (an MFlag) (like and kinda), and one was unsignaled6. The present section questioned whether the recognition of these metaphor-related words could be attributed to the respective word classes and the presence of metaphor

5 See sentences 4 and 21 in the Appendix.
6 See sentence 13 in the Appendix.
signals. This assumption is motivated by the fact that content words (such as nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs) represent “relatively easy cases of metaphor identification” because their meanings tend to be highly concrete and precise, whereas grammatical words (like prepositions) have highly abstract meanings (Pragglejaz 2007: 28–29), and metaphor signals “alert the language user to the fact that some form of contrast or comparison is at play” (Steen et al. 2010: 40).

The previously mentioned example (1) containing the metaphorically used adjective worth was not recognized as such by the vast majority of students (out of 27 participants, 24 voted “no”). Nor were the italicized metaphorically used nouns in the expressions: “it is their job to stand up for their way of life”, “the message this research project sends out”, and “Dr. Harrison’s vision for Marine Cloud Brightening”. The only sentences that were circled as metaphorical contained nouns reverse gear (18) (21 voted “yes”), used to indicate a way to reverse the solar geoengineering, and front line (6) (22 voted “yes”), used to signify a position where the Saami people directly deal with the effects of climate change. The contextual meaning of the lexical unit reverse gear is unconventionalized, and therefore more easily identifiable. The contextual meaning of front line can be found in dictionaries, but its basic war sense was probably accessed when the participants circled this sentence as metaphorical, because these remarks were made in the context of the effort to combat climate change. Prepositions behind, from, about, into, and in presented another category of false negatives, or examples that would be marked as metaphorical based on the procedure, but were not recognized by the participants. The examples in which the metaphoricity was expressed predominantly through verbs were largely taken to represent instances of literal meaning. Although their contextual meanings are conventionalized, their recognition score ranged from conventionalized cases that do not involve personification, which received 18.5 negative votes on average (such as: “the technology aimed at countering one global problem” in 17, or “Dr. Harrison’s vision […] is targeted” in 19), to those that do (such as: “solar geoengineering […] could rapidly halt rising temperatures” in 3; “A complaint from the Šami ensured […]” in 8; “the Saami council objects to the message this research project sends out” in 9, “the technology could discourage the urgent need” in 10; “stifling research into solar geoengineering” in 15, “everything would go back to normal” in 20), in which case the minimum number of negative votes was 17, the maximum 24. On the other hand, the portion of verbs that appeared in sentences that were circled as metaphorical received 19.5 votes on average. They include the following expressions: “as the debate heats up” (5), “If the fossil fuels industry leans back just a little and says ‘we’ll wait and see a bit’” (12), “the risks of solar geoengineering must be weighed against the chance it could save millions” (14), and “the technology […] could stoke

7 The metonymic reading is likewise possible. In that case, the linguistic expression objects would not be marked as metaphorical.
international conflict" (16). It is possible that the effect of imagery and the more bodily-related basic meanings of these verbs prompted the students to identify these sentences as metaphorical, given that it is fairly easy to visualize, for instance, the activity of stoking a fire and correlate it with disagreement, or to picture the act of measuring the heaviness of objects and correlate that with the act of carefully considering things. This extends to personification as well. While both examples (9 and 12) present instances of personification-with-metonymy, the contrast between the basic human sense and the contextual non-human sense for the entity that is personified is more evident in the case of the fossil fuel industry than it is in the case of the Sami council, despite the fact that both are used to represent people who work in the industry or are council members. The only borderline case (with equal number of positive and negative votes, since one student gave no reply) represented the act of stopping the climate action as pushing the pause button on a CD or DVD player (“The notion of a plan B might put a pause on the needed climate action”).

The two sentences which contained signaled direct metaphors were recognized by the majority of the participants, the unsignaled one, on the other hand, was not. The direct metaphor with the MFlag like (4) described the solar geoengineering termination shock as living underneath a hundred-ton boulder ready to fall at any time. The one with the MFlag kinda (21) compared solar geoengineering to a thin end of the wedge, the definition of this idiom was provided in the footnote of the questionnaire. Out of the 27 participants, 19 recognized the former direct metaphor (4) and 24 recognized the latter (21). The unsignaled one (13) equated a notion (of fossil fuel industry “leaning back”) with the thing that makes us not reach Paris agreement, i.e. an obstacle, which was invisible to almost twice as many students (17 replied “no”, 9 replied “yes”, and one gave no reply), despite the fact that it also contained an indirectly used metaphorical linguistic expression reach.

The recognition scores for the metaphorical use of prepositions (behind, from, about, into, in) were the lowest among the four word classes. This would suggest that the participants focused more on the abstract relations that they denote (e.g. temporal for in, or ‘concerning a particular subject’ for about), rather than on their basic spatial meanings. Yet, the category of content words reveals that the participants’ ability to distinguish between metaphorical and literal language was more likely motivated by the degree of conventionality, because the sentences with highly conventionalized contextual meanings of the adjective (worth) and nouns (job, vision, message) were not circled as metaphorical. The verbs present a category for which it was considerably more difficult to draw conclusions about the

---

8 For more information on the proposed typology of four different types of personification occurring in natural language data, see Dorst et al. (2011).

9 The Macmillan Online Dictionary defines it as: “something that is unimportant but will have serious, usually bad, effects in the future”.

---
tendencies in the behavior of the participants. The metaphoricity of a vast majority of sentences with metaphorically used verbs was not recognized, despite the fact that most of these sentences involve personification, and the lexical units belong to content words with conventionalized meanings. We would perhaps expect the contrast between the human source domain and non-human target domain to be more evident to our participants. However, Dorst et al. (2011: 174–175) note that the diverse nature in linguistic form, conceptual structure and communicative function of personification make the identification of this type of metaphor challenging even for metaphor analysts. Their study (Dorst et al. 2011: 188) on the recognition of personification in fiction excerpts by non-expert readers found that the recognition score was merely 35.7%, despite the fact that the students were provided with the definitions and examples of the terms metaphor and personification. Although the results seem to confirm the hypothesis that MFlags aid metaphor recognition by non-expert audience, it could also be motivated by the nature of the source, given that the lexemes wedge and boulder belong to concrete entities that are more readily contrasted with abstract targets, while the lexeme thing represents a vague term. This highlights the need to consider different variables, in Dorst et al.’s (2011: 180) terms “inherent properties” (i.e. word class, nature of the source, and nature of the target), when drawing conclusions about factors that affect metaphor recognition.

3.2. METAPHOR TRANSLATION

Exploring whether the participants were aware of the metaphorically used language was necessary for our second research goal. Namely, we wished to determine if metaphor recognition correlated with metaphor translation. It has previously been noted by Steen (ibid.: 17–18) that deliberate metaphors, i.e. the ones that are processed by cross-domain mapping and that explicitly instruct the addressee to think of one thing (say, an argument) in terms of another (war), require metaphorical translation in the TT, while non-deliberate ones do not. Similes and novel metaphors, therefore, tend to be translated as verbatim metaphors because they represent instances of “clearly metaphorical metaphors” (Steen 2014: 17; 22). We analyzed our data with this claim in mind, while also relying on the list of the most recurring procedures for metaphor transfer provided by Schäffner (2014: 76). These include: (i) metaphor into same metaphor (i.e. direct translation); (ii) metaphor into different metaphor (i.e. substitution of the image in the source text by a target language metaphor with the same or similar sense); (iii) metaphor into sense (i.e. paraphrase, shift to a non-figurative equivalent); (iv) deletion of metaphor; (v) use of a metaphor in the target text for a non-metaphorical expression in the source text (i.e. non-metaphor into metaphor); and (vi) addition of a metaphor in the target text without any linguistic motivation in the source text (i.e. O into metaphor). We pres-
ent the results of our analysis according to this typology, and discuss the examples in the order in which they were listed in the questionnaire.

Although not recognized for its metaphoricity, the italicized linguistic expression in the example (1) “Is solar geoengineering _worth_ the risk” represented an instance of direct translation, given that there is an equivalent metaphorical rendering in Serbian. It was therefore translated as: “Da li je solarni geoinženjering _vredan_ rizika?”. The metaphorically used preposition in (2) “That’s the simple idea _behind_ solar geoengineering” was also translated into the same TL metaphor “To je jednostavna ideja _iza_ solarnog geoinženjeringa” by the vast majority, because the TL conventionalized metaphorical sense of the preposition _iza_ captures the same use. There were, however, suggestions which included the verbs _nalaziti se_ (Eng. _to be_ and _stajati_ (Eng. _to stand_)) along with the preposition: “To je jednostavna ideja koja _stoji_ _iza_ solarnog geoinženjeringa/Iza solarnog geoinženjeringa _se_ _nalazi_ jednostavna ideja”. These verbs did not provide much in terms of meaning, since the “hidden reason” sense was expressed by the preposition itself. Only one student chose to make this sense more transparent by including the verb _kriti se_ (Eng. _to hide_): “To je prosta ideja koja se _krije_ _iza_ solarnog geoinženjeringa”. Particularly interesting were the suggestions which involved case-encoded metaphoricity: “To je osnovna ideja/suština/prava zamisao _solarnog geoinženjeringa_”. Out of the three suggestions, only the last one, i.e. “prava zamisao”, captures the “hidden reason” sense. Here, the ST _the hidden reason for something is the entity at the back of a thing_ or _a person_ metaphor was not translated as such, but replaced with the domain of _possession_, or genitive case. For that reason, we treat these instances (of case-encoded metaphoricity) as the result of the _metaphor into different metaphor_ procedure, because of the substitution of the image in the ST by a different TL metaphor. The conventionalized personification in (3) “Solar geoengineering is a radical response which could rapidly _halt_ rising temperatures” was translated as _zaustaviti_ or _sprečiti_, that is, the equivalent target language rendering (i.e. _direct translation_): “Solarni geoinženjering je radikalni/drastican odgovor koji _bi brzo/naglo može_ _zaustaviti_ /_sprečiti_ povećanje temperature”. Other possibilities for the word _response_ included the lexemes _rešenje_ (Eng. _solution_), _odluka_ (Eng. _decision_), and _mera_ (Eng. _measure_). Sentence (4) which contained a direct metaphor “It would be like _living underneath a hundred-ton boulder ready to fall at any time_” was translated verbatim, as suggested by Steen (2014). Apart from several variations for the words _boulder_ (translated either as _kamen_, _stena_, or _gromada_) and _fall_ (Ser. _pasti_, _srušiti se_, _obrušiti se_), most of the translations suggested by the students resembled the sentence: “To bi bilo/Bilo bi kao da _živimo/živite ispod stene teške hiljadu tona koja/kamena teškog hiljadu tona koji može pasti svakog trenutka”. In the majority of the renderings provided by the students the MFlag _like_ was replaced with its Serbian equivalent _kao_, which was followed by the verb _živeti_ (Eng. _to live_). Yet, in two similes the MFlag and the word class were different: “Bilo
bi nalog/slično životu ispod stene od stotinu tona koja je spremna da padne/ se obruši bilo kad". That is, the MFlag like was translated as similar to, and was followed by a noun life. Both solutions, however, retain the ST direct metaphor which was recognized by the students. For the conventionalized phrasal verb in (5) “As the debate heats up” the students primarily chose to translate the metaphor into a different metaphor, i.e. to substitute the image in the ST by a TL metaphor with the same or similar sense. For that reason, the most common rendering was: “Kako se debata zahukta-va”, where the tension and complexity of the situation are expressed via expression that belongs to the domain of motion, instead of the domain of temperature. The instances of the direct translation were far less frequent, they included the expressions: “Kako se debata zakuvari” (Eng. to boil), “Kako se debata zagreva” (Eng. to grow hotter), or “Kako se debata usija-va” (Eng. to blaze), whose basic temperature meanings are closer to the original. Still, the Serbian literal equivalent of heat up‒zagrejati se, does not comprise the suitable conventionalized metaphorical sense that could capture the ST’s use (“if a situation heats up, it becomes dangerous or full of problems”, Longman, sense 2), which could explain why the ST linguistic expression was predominantly not translated as the same TT linguistic expression. The contextual meaning of front line in (6), “The Saami people are on the front line of climate change”, is conventionalized and it reads: “a leading or important position in an activity” (Macmillan, sense 3), and it contrasts with the basic, military sense: “the area where two armies face each other and fight during a war” (Macmillan, sense 1). The Serbian literal and figurative meanings are the same, that is, they allow the same comparison, hence the direct translation: “Sami su na prvoj liniji fronta protiv klimatskih promena”. There were other suggestions, such as the ones below:

Sami su na prvom (odbrambenom) liniji u borbi protiv klimatskih promena.
Narod Sami predstavlja prvu liniju odbrane protiv klimatskih promena.
Sami su vodeći narod u borbi protiv promene klima.
Sami narod se bori u prvom redovima protiv klimatskih promena.

These citations confirm our hypothesis that the war sense was accessed when the participants circled this sentence as metaphorical. Having watched the video, the participants were aware of the fact that no actual fighting took place, which made the contrast more apparent. The phrase to be in/at/on the front line could also stand for the position where one is most likely to be criticized or attacked (Macmillan, sense 2), and seven of our participants evidently relied on this meaning when they translated the sentence: “Sami narod je prvi na udaru klimatske promene/Narod Sami je prvi na koje utiču klimatske promene”. Since the testing area covers the territory where the Saami people live, they are both the first ones to experience the effects of climate change and the ones who fight to stop the
research project, because they fear that it would stop the need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, which makes both interpretations acceptable.

In the case of (7) “It is their job to stand up for their way of life” the metaphorical linguistic expression was translated directly, as the same lexeme can express this meaning in Serbian: “Njihov posao je da se založe/zauzmu za svoj način života”. Some participants opted for other lexemes that have the same duty sense, such as odgovornost (engl. responsibility), zadatak (engl. task), and dužnost (engl. duty). This particular sentence was interesting because the participants relied on another procedure for metaphor transfer when they were dealing with the phrasal verb to stand up for. Both Longman and Macmillan online dictionaries list only one sense, which means that it counts as the basic meaning of the phrasal verb. Because the contextual and basic meanings are the same, this lexical unit cannot be marked as metaphorical. When translating this sentence into Serbian, some participants opted for the non-metaphorical equivalents zauzeti se/založiti se, but there were also those who chose the metaphorical expression boriti se (engl. to fight) in the TT for a non-metaphorical expression in the ST. In other words, they turned the non-metaphor into metaphor. Another sentence (8) which was metaphorical solely on account of the preposition (from), but was invisible to the students, corroborates the statement that the abstract meanings of prepositions tend to be directly accessed. This is evident in the translation: “Žalba/Primedba (pripadnika) Sami saveta je osigurala/se pobrinula/postarala da balon ne poleti/da projekat ne otpočne”. Contrary to its basic spatial meaning (“starting at a particular place or position”), in this context, from is used to say who sends or gives something. Its translation included the change of indirect metaphor into inflectional metaphor (case-encoded metaphoricity). The ST also contained the lexical unit ensure which has a non-human basic meaning listed in the Macmillan online dictionary10, but since people normally make sure that something happens, we take the human sense as basic and mark the unit as metaphorical due to personification. The student’s translations exhibited the same structure. The sentence (9) contained the greatest number of MRWs (four), belonging to three different word classes: “The Saami council objects to the message this research project sends out about climate change”. Most of the translations proposed by the students were of the following structure: “Sami savet se ne slaže sa porukom/suprotstavlja/protivi poruci/buni protiv poruke koju ovaj istraživački projekat/ovo istraživanje šalje/promovisi o/u vezi sa klimatskim promenama”. The two cases of metaphor-with-metonymy were transferred onto the TT (ne slaže/suprotstavlja/protivi/buni in the case of the Saami council, and šalje/promovisi in the case of the research project). The preposition about (“concerning or relating to a particular subject”, Longman, sense 1) was replaced with its literal Serbian equivalent o/u vezi sa, so was the lexeme message for which there

10 The two examples that serve to illustrate the meaning are: The lifejacket had almost certainly ensured her survival/Our new system ensures that everyone gets paid on time.
is a Serbian word that captures the same contextual meaning – *poruka*. This means that the MRWs from the ST were translated directly. Judging from the translations, the remaining eight participants were aware of the metonymy in the case of *the research project*. That is, they understood that the researchers (“projektni tim”) themselves were the ones who were trying to get this message across to the public, so they opted for the shift to a non-figurative equivalent (*metaphor into sense*): “Savet naroda Sami se protivi poruci koju projektni tim šalje o klimatskim promenama”. The basic sense of *discourage* in (10), “This technology could discourage the urgent need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions”, is human: “to persuade someone not to do something, especially by making it seem difficult or bad” (*Longman*, sense 1). But its non-human sense is also conventional: “to make something less likely to happen”11 (*Longman*, sense 3), which makes it an example of a conventionalized personification. The Serbian translation contained the same metaphor type (personification): “Ova tehnologija bi mogla da demotiviše/obeshrabri hitnu potrebu/odvrati od hitne potrebe za smanjenjem efekata staklene bašte/da se smanji emisija gasova sa efektom staklene bašte”. The difference between the two languages lies in the fact that the Serbian equivalents *demotivisati*, *obeshrabriti*, and *odvratiti* refer to human agents and patients, which makes the given example an instance of a novel personification since the agent is non-human (*technology*). As predicted by metaphor analysts (Steen 2014), the novel metaphor in (11) “The notion of a plan B might put a pause on the needed climate action” was largely translated verbatim: “Ideja o postojanju plana B/rezervnog plana bi mogla da pauzira/stopira potrebnu klimatsku akciju”. Apart from representing the attempt to stop the climate action as the act of pushing the pause button on a CD or DVD player, the participants also provided the rendering which centered on the notion of physical movement: “Sama ideja o planu B možda zaustavi/bi mogla zaustaviti/da zaustavi potrebne klimatske akcije”, because the basic sense in the dictionary for the Serbian verb *zaustaviti* (engl. *to stop*) reads: “to stop somebody from moving” (RSJ 2011: 405). Therefore, they substituted the image in the ST by the TL one with a similar sense. The situation was somewhat similar in the case of the next example (12): “If the fossil fuel industry leans back just a little and says ‘we’ll wait and see a bit’”. The four metaphorically used verbs represent cases of personification-with-metonymy, and three of them (*say*, *wait*, and *see*) were replaced with the equivalent source domain language in Serbian (i.e. *kazati*, *sačekati*, and *videti*, respectively). The differences concerned the expression *lean back*, as the following examples illustrate:

Ako industrija fosilnih goriva zastane/se zaustavi na kratko i kaže „hajde da sačekamo malo i vidimo” [...].
Ako se kompanije fosilnih goriva povuku nazad i kažu „sačekacemo i videti” [...].

11 As in: “Aspirin may discourage tumor growth in some types of cancer”.

Lipar / Journal for Literature, Language, Art and Culture / Year XXIV / Volume 81
The students’ decision not to use the literal Serbian equivalent of *lean back* is most likely motivated by the fact that the verb *nasloniti se* does not comprise the suitable metaphorical sense that could fit this context (see full entry in RSJ 2011: 779). In fact, the contextual and basic meaning in the original (ST) are the same: “to sit or lie in a comfortable relaxed way” (*Longman*), but the basic meaning of the Serbian equivalent lacks this notion of comfort and relaxation/control, and focuses more on the notion of support. Since the act of leaning back indicates a relaxed state, it is possible to infer the intended meaning – to reduce fossil fuel emissions. Therefore, they probably chose to substitute this verb with verbs that are close to the original in meaning. One group opted for the verbs denoting movement *zastati, zaustaviti se* (engl. *to stop moving*), and *povući se* (engl. *to back away*), which are the linguistic manifestations of the conceptual metaphor **TO REDUCE FOSSIL FUEL EMISSIONS IS TO STOP MOVING**. The other group chose expressions *opustiti se* (engl. *to relax*) and *popustiti* (engl. *to relax your grip/hold*), which represent manifestations of the **TO BECOME MORE AGREEABLE TO THE IDEA OF CUTTING FOSSIL FUEL EMISSIONS IS TO RELAX (YOUR GRIP/ HOLD)** conceptual metaphor.

The previously mentioned direct metaphor **NOTION IS A THING (AN OBSTACLE)** in (13): “That notion might be the thing that makes us not reach Paris agreement” was largely translated in the exact same words: “Taj pojam bi mogao da bude ono što nam neće dozvoliti da stignemo do Pariskog sporazuma”. Some of the variations included the use of lexemes *ideja* (engl. *idea*) and *pomisao* (engl. *thought*) for the lexeme *notion*, as well as the noun *stvar* for the vague term thing. Instead of merely equating a notion to an obstacle, some students highlighted its causative role by opting for the Serbian noun *razlog* (engl. *reason*): “To bi mogao biti razlog zbog kojeg nećemo doći/stići do Pariskog sporazuma”, or by paraphrasing it: “Zbog te ideje možda ne stignemo do Pariskog sporazuma” – in which case the direct metaphor is replaced by an indirect one. Even the directly expressed metaphorical comparisons contained the lexical unit *reach* (Ser. *dostići, doći do, or stići do*), which was metaphorical because the basic meaning, “to arrive somewhere” (*Macmillan*, sense 1), contrasted with the contextual meaning, “to achieve something” (*Macmillan*, sense 3). In both languages, therefore, **REACHING AN AGREEMENT IS REPRESENTED AS REACHING THE DESTINATION**. There was only one exception in our data set. Namely, there was a shift to a non-figurative equivalent in the TT (**metaphor into sense**): “Ta ideja može biti ono što će nas sprečiti da potpišemo Pariski sporazum”. The careful consideration of the risks of solar geoengineering was represented in the ST as discovering their weight (“The risks of solar geoengineering must be weighed against the chance it could save millions from heatwaves.”).
The students substituted the metaphorical expression with the non-metaphorical one, using the verb *uporediti* (engl. *to compare*): “Rizici se moraju *uporediti* sa šansom da bi solarni geoinženjering mogao spasiti milione od toplotnih talasa”, which shows that they focused more on the overall sense of the sentence. In fact, Serbian language does contain the literal equivalent of the verb *to weigh*, i.e. *izvagati*, with the same basic meaning, but this word does not have a suitable conventionalized metaphorical sense as the prepositional verb *weigh against* (*Macmillan*, sense 2). In 15, “*Stifling* research *into* solar geoengineering now could increase the risk of negative consequences *in the future*”, the prepositions were replaced with corresponding Serbian prepositions. That is, *u* for “*in the future*”, because the same conceptual metaphor *time is a container* is present in both Serbian and English, and *o* for “research *into* solar geoengineering”, since it is the Serbian equivalent for talking about that which someone is trying to find out information about. *Stifling*, however, was translated either directly: “*Gušenje*/*Prigušivanje* istraživanja *o* solarnom geoinženjeringu bi moglo da poveća rizik od negativnih posledica *u* budućnosti”, or by resorting to the non-metaphorical equivalent: “*Obustavljanje* istraživanja *o* solarnom geoinženjeringu bi moglo povećati rizike od negativnih ishoda *u* budućnosti”. In the first case, the translation remains more true to the ST, with the same contrast between the basic (“to stop someone from breathing”) and contextual meaning (“to stop something from developing normally, to stop research”), while in the second this meaning is paraphrased as “to stop doing research”. Out of 27 students, 22 recognized the metaphorical use in 16, opting for the synonymous TL expressions which all belong to the domain of *fire* that was present in the ST:

Tehnologija dizajnirana da spusti temperature bi mogla da *potpali/razplamsa/ raspali* međunarodni sukob.  
Tehnologija koja je stvorena da spusti temperature samo bi *dolila ulje na vatru* po pitanju međunarodnih sukoba.

The other renderings contained the non-metaphorical expressions, such as: “Tehnologija koja je stvorena/dizajnirana da spusti temperature bi mogla izazvati/podstaći konflikt svetskih razmera”.

The prepositional verb *aim at* (in 17) was predominantly rendered in precisely equivalent language in Serbian (*metaphor into same metaphor*), as the basic (“to choose the place, person etc. that you want to hit or reach and point a weapon or another object towards them”, *Longman*, sense 3) and contextual meaning (“to try or to intend to achieve something”, *Longman*, sense 1) in the TL are the same: “Tehnologija koja *ima za cilj/nastala sa ciljem/koja cilja na* to da se zaustavi jedan svetski problem mogla bi stvoriti druge”. Only two students turned the metaphor into sense: “Tehnologija osmišljena/stvorena da spusti temperature bi mogla izazvati/podstaći konflikt svetskih razmera”. In 19, “Some fear being locked into solar geoengineering without the *reverse gear*”, two lexical units had the potential to be treated
as MRWs – lock into and reverse gear. Yet, according to the procedure, the phrasal verb lock into would not be marked as a MRW because only one, abstract sense is listed in the dictionary (“to involve someone or something in a system, plan etc. in such a way that they cannot easily escape from it”, Macmillan, sense 1) and its contextual meaning does not contrast with it, but is very closely related to it. The students captured this meaning in the TT by words like zarobiti, zaključati, zaglaviti, whose basic meanings denote the state of being trapped in a container (room). As the solar geoengineering represents the container in this example, these verbs should be treated as metaphorical linguistic realizations of the conceptual metaphor SOLAR GEOENGINEERING IS A CONTAINER. Therefore, the participants used a metaphor in the TT for a non-metaphorical expression in the ST (i.e. they turned the non-metaphor into metaphor).

Reverse gear, on the other hand, shows that they relied on the opposite technique, metaphor into sense, because the contrast between the way to reverse the solar geoengineering and the position of the gears in a vehicle that make it go backwards was paraphrased as follows: “Neki se plaše da će biti zaključani u solarnom geoinženjeringu bez opreme kojom bi se povratiš prethodno stanje/koja može da ga preokrene/opcije da se taj postupak obustavi”. This is probably due to the fact that the Serbian literal equivalent rikverc does not comprise the suitable conventionalized metaphorical sense. Some of the students kept the metaphorical sense by opting for the noun povratak (engl. return): “Neki se boje da ne budu zaključani/zarobljeni u solarnom geoinženjeringu bez povratak”, thus comparing the reversal of solar geoengineering to the act of going back to a place. The MRW vision in (19) “Dr. Harrison’s vision for Marine Cloud Brightening is targeted and temporary”, whose metaphoricity arises from the contrast between the ability to see and the idea of what something should be like, was replaced with Serbian equivalents which do not have more basic meanings, and are therefore non-metaphorical: ideja, zamisao, vizija. The effect solar geoengineering has on a limited area, expressed in the ST via lexical unit targeted, was translated as “dr Harisonova vizija je usmerena i prolazna/privremena/kratkog roka”. Highly conventionalized phrasal verbs, such as “go back” in (20) “Everything would go back to normal”, are particularly difficult to recognize, especially by non-expert audience, particularly when they are a part of common expressions like “to go back to normal”. In our study, 24 students failed to see the connection between the spatial sense “returning to a place” (Longman, sense 1) and to “make a situation the same as it was before” (Longman, sense 2). In fact, they opted for the same expression in the TL, “Sve bi se vratio u normalu/normalizovalo nakon par dana”. The final example (21) contained an idiom which was a part of the signaled direct metaphor. MIPVU (Steen et al. 2010: 81) treats idioms as a stretch of text with each component representing a separate lexical unit, because most idioms are decomposable. In this respect, it is easy to compare “a thin end of the wedge”, which is used for splitting wood, to dangerous effects of a practice such as solar geoen-
Examining Serbian EFL Learners’ Metaphoric Competence: Metaphor Identification And Translation

gineering. Among the suggested renderings were: “Moja jedina briga je da bi ovo mogao biti samo početak/početak nečeg većeg/katastrofe”. They thus substituted the image in the ST (wedge) with a different one (the beginning/cause of something that will have serious, negative effects) that has a similar contextual meaning. Four participants produced verbatim translations of the ST’s metaphorical use: “Moja jedina briga je da bi ovo na neki način bio oštar deo klina/ poput tanjeg kraja klina”, these alternatives were closer to the original.

The instances which the students managed to recognize include: the signaled direct metaphors with concrete sources (boulder and wedge), lexical units with conventionalized contextual meanings belonging to the domains of heat (heat up, stoke), war (front line), and weight (weigh against), a novel personification (put a pause on), a novel metaphor (reverse gear), and a personification-with-metonymy (in the case of the fossil fuel industry). These were all largely translated using the equivalent TL expressions (direct translation technique). The students did produce verbatim translations of similes and the novel metaphor, thus confirming Steen’s earlier claim (2014). However, a much larger sample is needed in order to establish that metaphor recognition correlates with metaphor translation, since there were lexical units in our study that were part of the sentences which the students circled as metaphorical, like weigh against, but were translated using the non-metaphorical equivalent. The use of metaphor was comparable between English (ST) and Serbian (TT) in the case of lexical units for which there was an equivalent metaphorical rendering in the TL, while the cases where a word’s literal translation could not capture the ST’s use were translated either by turning the metaphor into sense, or metaphor into different metaphor.

4. CONCLUDING REMARKS

Metaphor recognition by non-expert audience, specifically Serbian EFL learners, was observed in this study with reference to variables word class and metaphor signaling. We sought to determine whether there is any interaction between these variables and metaphor identification, that is, if sentences which contain metaphor signals and metaphorical linguistic expressions that belong to a particular word class are recognized more often than others. The results show that parts of speech that are classified as grammatical words, in our case – prepositions, are less frequently detected than content words (verb, noun, or adjective). Yet, word class and MFlags alone do not determine students’ ability to distinguish between literal and metaphorical language. Other variables, primarily the degree of conventionality and the nature of the source, prove to be equally relevant factors. It has repeatedly been found that the more conventionalized the metaphor is, the more it is processed by categorization, “due to the emergence of an ab-
abstract superordinate category that covers both the source and target term” (Dorst et al. 2011: 179; Krennmayr 2011: 239, 242). This makes our results on metaphor recognition without a structured metaphorical input in line with those of other researchers (e.g. Dorst et al. 2011: 188) who provide the participants with a brief description of what is meant by the term metaphor. Interestingly, Littlemore’s (2010: 295) study showed that student responses could correlate with metaphor goodness instead of comprehensibility. In other words, rather than judging whether there is a relationship between two elements of a sentence, the students in her study judged the quality of the metaphors. This indicates that, even when the participants are provided with the definition of metaphor12, they might not carry out the procedure that is suggested in the rubric. Therefore, while defining metaphor in cognitive linguistic terms has the potential to increase the chances of metaphor recognition, it does not automatically guarantee it. In our case, the numbers were relatively low in percentage terms (42.86%), since less than a half of the sentences were recognized as metaphorical. Still, the analysis showed that the students were able to spot certain instances of metaphorically used language (primarily the signaled direct metaphors with concrete sources, novel metaphor/personification, sentences containing expressions whose conventionalized contextual meanings belong to the domains of heat (heat up, stoke), weight (weigh against), and war (front line)) without the definition. In this particular study, the differences in translation seemed to be caused by the availability of the conventionalized metaphorical senses across the SL and TL lexicon. Whether the students are actually aware of the conceptual metaphors that govern their choice of a specific linguistic manifestation is a separate research question.

Given that the goal of this study was merely to check whether the participants perceive metaphor and to determine which metaphors they tend to translate, we did not pinpoint the exact location of the MRWs. This, we feared, would have made the participants aware of the metaphorical reading. Although the majority of the sentences used in the questionnaire were short, making it easy to judge which lexical unit displays metaphorical use, the arguments regarding the metaphoricity of words that belong to a particular word class would have been more compelling had we asked the participants to circle the words which they judged to be metaphorical. This has to be recognized as a limitation of the study and should be corrected in future research. In addition, comments could be provided by the participants so that their decisions could be more evident to the metaphor analyst. Instead of calling on them to make a binary decision, the participants could be given more freedom, since Littlemore’s (2010: 298) pre-piloting showed that “participants found it easier to make their choice from a continuum of responses rather than to have to make a yes/no decision”. Such

12 For instance, in the study carried out by Littlemore (2010: 306), the students were given the following explanation: “A metaphor is a statement which is not literally correct, but which establishes a relationship between two parts of a sentence”.

190 Липар / Часопис за књижевност, језик, уметност и културу / Година XXIV / Број 81
information could be especially useful when studying metaphor interpretation, but it was not included in our analysis since metaphor translation was our primary focus of discussion.

The information on this matter, i.e. metaphoric competence prior to a structured metaphorical input, could help language instructors predict or point out truly problematic cases which require more attention when teaching metaphor. Evidently, prepositions present a highly abstract category whose metaphoricity is often overlooked because their abstract contextual meanings are accessed directly. The degree to which the contextual meaning of a lexical unit is conventionalized, as much prior research and the present study show, represents another crucial factor, as students tend to notice novel metaphors and regard the conventional ones as a typical way of speaking about target concepts. Therefore, reflections on the relation between metaphor and these other variables are of great value in this regard. Translating the cross-domain mapping from a ST to a TT involves different considerations, some of which can be genre-specific (e.g. when translating poetry or classic texts) (Steen 2014: 21). Our study focused on news discourse, but it would be interesting to explore the same topic in different types of discourse in the future.

References

Arduini 2014: S. Arduini, Metaphor, translation, cognition, in: D. Miller, E. Monti (Eds.), Tradurre Figure/Translating Figurative Language, Bologna: CeSLiC, 41–52.

Bogetić 2017: K. Bogetić, Language is a beautiful creature, not an old fridge: Direct metaphors as corrective framing devices, Metaphor and the Social World, 7(2), 190–212.


Eco 2014: U. Eco, Ekfrasi, ipotiposi e metafora, in: D. Miller, E. Monti (Eds.), Tradurre Figure/Translating Figurative Language, Bologna: CeSLiC, 1–9.


Schäffner 2014: C. Schäffner, Umbrellas and firewalls: Metaphors in debating the financial crisis from the perspective of translation studies, in: D. Miller, E. Monti (Eds.), Tradurre Figure/Translating Figurative Language, Bologna: CeSLiC, 69–84.

Shuttleworth 2014: M. Shuttleworth, Translation studies and metaphor studies: Possible paths of interaction between two well-established disciplines, in: D. Miller, E. Monti (Eds.), Tradurre Figure/Translating Figurative Language, Bologna: CeSLiC, 53–65.


Sources

The Economist, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dFMMyRsWo

Macmillan dictionary, https://www.macmillandictionary.com


RSJ 2011: Rečnik srpskoga jezika, Novi Sad: Matica srpska.
APPENDIX

1. **Judge whether the following sentences contain a word/words that is/are used metaphorically.**

2. **Translate the sentences into Serbian.**

1. Is solar geoengineering worth the risk?  
   **YES  NO**
   
   **Translation:** ________________________________

2. That's the simple idea behind solar geoengineering.  
   **YES  NO**

   **Translation:** ________________________________

3. Solar geoengineering [is] a radical response which could rapidly halt rising temperatures.  
   **YES  NO**

   **Translation:** ________________________________

4. It would be like living underneath a hundred-ton boulder ready to fall at any time.  
   **YES  NO**

   **Translation:** ________________________________

5. As the debate heats up, [...].  
   **YES  NO**

   **Translation:** ________________________________

6. The Saami people are on the front line of climate change.  
   **YES  NO**

   **Translation:** ________________________________

7. It is their job to stand up for their way of life.  
   **YES  NO**

   **Translation:** ________________________________

8. A complaint from the Saami council ensured it (the balloon) didn't take off.  
   **YES  NO**

   **Translation:** ________________________________

9. The Saami council objects to the message this research project sends out about climate change.  
   **YES  NO**

   **Translation:** ________________________________

10. This technology could discourage the urgent need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.  
    **YES  NO**

    **Translation:** ________________________________
11. The notion of a plan B might put a pause on the needed climate action.
YES  NO
Translation: ________________________________

12. If the fossil fuels industry leans back just a little and says “we’ll wait and see a bit” [...].
YES  NO
Translation: ________________________________

13. That notion might be the thing that makes us not reach Paris agreement.
YES  NO
Translation: ________________________________

14. The risks of solar geoengineering must be weighed against the chance it could save millions from heatwaves.
YES  NO
Translation: ________________________________

15. Stifling research into solar geoengineering now could increase the risk of negative consequences in the future.
YES  NO
Translation: ________________________________

16. The technology designed to cool the climate could stoke international conflict.
YES  NO
Translation: ________________________________

17. The technology aimed at countering one global problem could create others.
YES  NO
Translation: ________________________________

18. Some fear being locked into solar geoengineering without the reverse gear.
YES  NO
Translation: ________________________________

19. Dr. Harrison’s vision for Marine Cloud Brightening is targeted and temporary.
YES  NO
Translation: ________________________________

20. Everything would go back to normal after a few days.
Examining Serbian Efl Learners' Metaphoric Competence: Metaphor Identification And Translation

YES  NO
Translation: __________________________________________________________

21. My only concern is that this would kinda be a thin end of the wedge².
YES  NO
Translation: __________________________________________________________

3. How would you define the term metaphor in your own words?

---

1 If you stoke a fire, you add coal or wood to it to keep it burning.
2 Something that is not important by itself but will have serious, usually bad, effects in the future.

Тамара Н. Јаневска / МЕТАФОРИЧКА КОМПЕТЕНЦИЈА УЧЕНИКА ЕНГЛЕСКОГ ЈЕЗИКА КАО СТРАНОГ: ИДЕНТИФИКАЦИЈА И ПРЕВОЂЕЊЕ МЕТАФОРИЧКИХ ЈЕЗИЧКИХ ИЗРАЗА

Резиме / Рад је посвећен испитивању метафоричке компетенције српских студената англистике. Студенти који су учествовали у истраживању нису раније били изложени метафоричком инпуту и теорији појмовне метафоре (Лејкоф и Џонсон 1980). Истраживање се заснива на видео-снимку британских недељних новина The Economist који говори о значају соларног геоинжењеринга. За потребе истраживања, изворни текст је најпре транскрибован, а затим је примењена процедура за идентификовање метафоричких језичких израза (MIPVU, Стен и др. 2010). На тај начин је издвојено неколико реченица које су садржали барем један метафорички употребљен израз. Упитник на коме се базира истраживање се састојао из три целине. У овом раду износе се запажања везана за прва два задатка. Први задатак је осмишљен како би се утврдила способност ученика да уоче реченице које садрже изразе који се могу сматрати метафоричким. Други циљ био је испитати да ли се, и у ком случају, језичке метафоре из изворног текста на engleskom jeziku gube prilikom prevođenja na srpski jezik. Dobijeni rezultati se mogu uporediti sa rezultatima nakon izlaganja metaforichkom inputu, chime bi se stekao potpuniy vuid u proces razvoja metaforichke kompetencije.

Кључне речи: метафоричка компетенција, идентификација метафоричких језичких израза, превођење метафора, ученици енглеског језика као страног, теорија појмовне метафоре, новински дискурс

Прихваћен за штампу марта 2023.