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Abstract

The comparison of some of US President Barack Obama's public speeches with their translations into German may, among other insights, also reveal some construal differences between the two languages involved. In particular by studying some of the denotational incongruencies (Jäkel 2001, 2003b, 2010, 2012) displayed in this comparison, we can gain not only insights into Obama's ingenuous rhetoric. More than anything else, it is the shortcomings of those German translations which reveal most about English-German construal differences as well as about the original forms and functions of rhetorical devices chosen by the new US President – or his crew of advisers.

The focus will be on Obama's victory speech on election night, 11/4/2008, in Chicago (Obama 2008a), and on his inaugural address delivered on 1/20/2009 in Washington, D.C. (Obama 2009a). Other landmark speeches like Obama's Prague speech (4/5/2009) and his Cairo speech (6/4/2009) are also part of the investigated corpus. Using the analytical tools of cognitive semantics (Lakoff 1993a, 1993b, 2004; Geeraerts 2006; Jäkel 2003a), we will approach those linguistic devices and strategies so typical of Obama's rhetoric. Conceptual metaphors as well as other tropes and figures of speech will be analysed as to their form and function, to be compared to their translations into German.

This case study is meant as a contribution to the growing body of research in Applied Cognitive Linguistics on the one hand, and to the newly revived investigation of linguistic relativity on the other hand.

1. Introduction

If we as linguists and students of all things Anglo-American analyse the speeches of US-American Presidents, and if we as investigators of intercultural issues compare these to their translations into German, we are sometimes likely to learn at least as much about our own linguistic culture as about the English language and US-American culture. For our students, that kind of comparative analysis of currently relevant discourses, including the critique of translations, will supply a central building block for the interdisciplinary formation of a language awareness so crucial for both language teachers and (inter)cultural scientists. Short as it is, the following contribution can only introduce a limited selection of examples from this analysis, in the hope to maybe whet the reader's appetite for more.

With the election and coming into office of Barack Obama as President of the United States of America at the end of 2008 and the beginning of 2009, the global community

witnessed a historical moment, which can hardly leave anybody cold, as the conduct and actions of the man in the world's still most influential office are bound to affect us all in so many ways. All through his Presidential Campaign, Barack Obama has proved himself as a political orator of outstanding rhetorical qualities. This paper will look at some of the early public speeches held by the newly elected US-President. The analysis will focus on Obama's great victory speech on election night, November 4th 2008, in Grant Park, Chicago (Obama 2008a), and on his inaugural address delivered on January 20th 2009 in Washington, D.C. (Obama 2009a). Two other landmark speeches from Obama's first half year in office, namely his Prague speech on nuclear weapons (4/5/2009) and his Cairo speech "A New Beginning" (6/4/2009) are also part of the investigated corpus, although they are not treated explicitly in this prepublished paper. Using the analytical tools of Cognitive Semantics (Fillmore 1982; Lakoff 1993a, 1993b, 2004; Radden & Kövecses 1999; Geeraerts 2006; Jäkel 2003a, 2003b), we will approach those linguistic devices and strategies so typical of Obama's rhetoric. Conceptual metaphors and metonymies as well as other tropes and figures of speech will be analysed as to their form and function.

A further, intercultural dimension of critical analysis will be reached by bringing in a comparison with some of the translations of Obama's speeches into German (Obama 2008b, 2009b). By studying some of the denotational incongruencies (Jäkel 2001, 2003b, 2010, 2012) displayed in this comparison, we can gain additional insights into Obama's ingenuous rhetoric. More than anything else, it is the shortcomings of those German translations which reveal most about the original forms and functions of rhetorical devices chosen by the new US-President – or his crew of advisers. Even though we will have to restrict ourselves to only some of the linguistic aspects in exemplary fashion, the following treatise will reveal some surprising news, if not revolutionary developments: maybe even some kind of linguistic culture shock. This case study is meant as a contribution to the growing body of research in Applied Cognitive Linguistics, and in particular, to the development of a Critical Cognitive Poetics and Rhetoric.

As a technical term, *denotational incongruencies* is applied "when roughly equivalent lexemes in different languages are used without full synonymy in the sense of *denotational equivalence*" (Jäkel 2001: 157; cf. Lyons 1977: 213). Apart from comparative semantics as such, the investigation of denotational incongruencies of various kinds affects in particular issues of translation, "[p]robably the most promising area of application" (Jäkel 2003b: 170). It is its focus on denotational incongruencies, which makes this case study also a contribution to the newly revived investigation of linguistic relativity.

2. "Yes, we can!" – The Rhetoric of the Victor, Lost in Translation

We start with selected examples from Obama's victory speech held in Grant Park, Chicago, on election night, November 4th 2008. Each of the excerpts (1-8) quotes as (a) the original source text (Obama 2008a), and as (b) its German translation (Obama 2008b). The victorious President elect begins his speech as follows:

- (1a) Hello, *Chicago*. If there is anyone out there *who still doubts* that America is a place where all things are possible, *who still wonders* if the dream of our founders is alive in our time, *who still questions* the power of our democracy, *tonight is your answer*.

"*Hello, Chicago*." This is how pop- and rock stars address their audience, politicians are expected to use a more distinguished style, even in the U.S.A. But coming from the victor Obama, who has been displaying quite some stardom appeal, we buy this casual form of address, in which metonymically THE CITY stands for THE AUDIENCE. If, on the other hand, we could imagine a serious German politician meeting his electorate with a "*Hallo, Dortmund*" seems more than doubtful. Right after that casual form of address, Obama's opening sentence sets off quite a rhetorical firework: The powerful triad of those relative clauses, "*who still doubts ... – who still wonders ... – who still questions ...*", serves to raise expectations culminating in the climax of the final main clause, "*tonight is your answer*", which achieves its strong effect and pathos by way of the metonymic use of *tonight* as grammatical subject: THE TIME OF DAY stands for THE EVENT. See how poor the translation looks in comparison (1b):

- (1b) *Hallo, Chicago*. Wenn es da draußen irgendjemand gibt, der noch zweifelt, dass Amerika ein Ort ist, wo alles möglich ist, der sich noch fragt, ob der Traum unserer Gründer heute lebendig ist, der Fragen zur Kraft unserer Demokratie aufwirft, *hat heute eine Antwort bekommen*.

Already Obama's triad is not reconstructed in the least, but jeopardized by the irritating *sich* in the second relative clause, to be ruined completely by the badly designed construction "*der Fragen ... aufwirft*" in the third. That there is no final pithy main clause may be due to the fact that German lacks a one-word equivalent to English *tonight*, which could function as grammatical subject. That eventually the whole of sentence (1b) turns out to be completely ungrammatical, however, is a bad mistake.

- (2a) We are, and always will be, the United States of America.
- (2b) Wir sind die Vereinigten Staaten von Amerika und werden das immer sein.

The simple semantics of such an 'American' sentence as (2a) can easily be salvaged in German. But that sentence (2a), short as it is, has so much more that makes it attractive, and that is lost in (2b): Not only Obama's rhythm and melody of sentence intonation, but even

his suspense-creating distribution of theme and rheme fall by the wayside in the translation. "Wir sind *und bleiben für immer ...*" would have made for a more convincing solution, in terms of functional syntax as well as in terms of rhetoric.

- (3a) It's been a long time coming, but tonight, because of what we did *on this date in this election at this defining moment change has come to America.*
- (3b) Es hat lange gedauert, aber heute abend *ist der Wandel in Amerika angekommen* – weil wir es geschafft haben am Datum dieser Wahl in diesem entscheidenden Augenblick.

In (3a), Obama brings to bear the central theme of his election campaign, "*change*", prepared by the rhetorical build-up of another triadic structure: "*on this date – in this election – at this defining moment*", leading up to the relieving main clause: "*change has come to America.*" What a triumphant announcement, what pathos! The translation (3b) completely destroys this masterpiece of a sentence: The triad is scattered to the four winds, pointlessly trailing behind the prematurely wasted "*change*", which is turned into "*Wandel*". The semantic field displays a granularity differential (Jäkel 2001: 161-62; Jäkel 2012: 47-52; cf. Fillmore 1982) between the two languages (cf. figure 1): For the English noun *change*, the German lexicon offers not only *Wandel*, but also *Wechsel*, *Wende*, *Änderung*, and *Veränderung*, which all resonate in the meaning of English *change*. In such a case of denotational incongruency, the translation is forced to choose. However, instead of going for the unfavourably [+ARCHAIC] connoted (cf. Lipka 2002: 127-28) *Wandel*, it would have done better to choose a contextually more fitting field neighbour such as *Wechsel* or *Wende*.

English	German
<i>change</i>	<i>Wandel</i>
	<i>Wechsel</i>
	<i>Wende</i>
	<i>Änderung</i>
	<i>Veränderung</i>

Figure 1: Granularity differential *change* vs *Wandel*

- (4a) A little bit earlier this evening, I received an extraordinarily *gracious* call from Senator McCain. [...] We are better off for the service rendered by this brave and selfless *leader*.
- (4b) Etwas früher an diesem Abend habe ich einen außergewöhnlich *freundlichen* Anruf von Senator McCain erhalten. [...] Uns geht es besser dank des Dienstes, den dieser tapfere und selbstlose *Führer* geleistet hat.

Immediately following example (3a), Obama shows his reverence for his defeated opponent McCain, in a passage (4a) that has two dangerous points in store for the German translation (4b): First, rendering the English adjective *gracious* to describe McCain's call as *freundlich*, is much too weak. *Gracious* in this context includes not only friendliness, but some sort of kindness, magnanimity, grace, and generosity, which would be translated best as *großzügig*. Secondly, while there is nothing suspicious about the English noun *leader*, the German noun *Führer*, by contrast, has since the end of the 'Third Reich' been marked with an unambiguously negative connotation as one of those words whose use in a context like this should be ruled out for any reasonably sensitive translator.

- (5a) But above all, I will never forget who this victory truly belongs to. It belongs to *you*.
- (5b) Aber vor allem werde ich nie vergessen, wem dieser Sieg in Wahrheit gehört. Er gehört *euch*.

With example (5) we have another case of a relatively simple denotational incongruency including a granularity differential (Jäkel 2001: 161-62; Jäkel 2012: 47-52): Whereas modern English only has an unproblematic *you* as the natural pronoun of choice for addressing anybody from closest kin to complete strangers, German as a T/V-language (Levinson 1983: 89-92) is spoiled for choice between the more intimate *du/ihr* and the more formal *Sie* (cf. figure 2).

English	German
<i>you</i>	<i>ihr (euch)</i>
	<i>Sie (Ihnen)</i>

Figure 2: Granularity differential *you* vs *ihr*

But is the translated Obama to address his audience intimately as *ihr* (5b)? While this form of address may be acceptable for his followers gathered in Chicago to celebrate their hero, the repeated use of the T-pronoun *eure* in the next excerpt (6b), where it is aimed explicitly at the voters supporting his opponent, seems inappropriate, making Obama sound like attempting to curry favour. Apparently this translation has opted for a universal T-intimacy, a highly questionable decision.

- (6a) And to those Americans whose support I have yet to earn, I may not have won your *vote* tonight, but I hear your *voices*. I need your help. And I will be your President, too. – And to all those watching tonight from beyond our shores, [...] *a new dawn of American leadership* is at hand.
- (6b) Und an diejenigen Amerikaner, deren Unterstützung ich erst noch erlangen muss: Ich mag heute nicht eure *Stimme* bekommen haben, aber ich höre eure *Stimmen*. Ich brauche eure Hilfe. Und ich werde auch euer

Präsident sein. – Und an alle, die heute abend jenseits unserer Küsten zuschauen, [...] *eine neue Morgendämmerung der amerikanischen Führungskraft* ist da.

But the translatory problems in example (6) do not end with the matter of T/V-pronouns. The translator's juxtaposition of *Stimme* versus *Stimmen* in (6b) has an unintentionally comical effect, whereas Obama (6a), without any real pun, only contrasts the assonant nouns *vote* und *voices*. Moreover, with example (6) we have also eventually reached the problem of translating metaphors (Jäkel 2003b). Where Obama's (6a) "new dawn", though dramatically emotional, is semantically well-chosen to express the AMERICAN LEADERSHIP as NEW DAY metaphor, the translated (6b) "neue Morgendämmerung" creates an unsuitably dozy impression. To capture Obama's pathos, the more appropriate translation would be "neue Morgenröte" with its unambiguously positive connotations. – With the following example (7) we stick to the metaphor problem:

- (7a) The *road ahead* will be *long*. Our *climb* will be *steep*. We may not *get there* in one year or even in one term. But, America, I have never been more hopeful than I am tonight that we will *get there*. I promise you, we as a people will *get there*.
- (7b) Die *Straße* vor uns wird lang sein. Unser Anstieg wird steil sein. Wir werden nicht in einem Jahr oder selbst in einer Amtszeit dort ankommen. Aber, Amerika, ich war nie hoffnungsvoller als heute abend, dass wir *dort hinkommen* werden. Ich verspreche euch, wir als ein Volk werden *dort hingelangen*.

Here (7a) Obama uses the rather conventional JOURNEY- or PATH-metaphor, in order to attune his listeners to strenuous long term efforts, which are supposed to be worthwhile in view of the common goal that can be reached. The rhetorical 'surplus value' of this conceptual metaphor PROGRESS as JOURNEY (Lakoff 1993a: 206-08; Jäkel 2003b: 263-64) lies in the fact that the speaker, relying on the persuasive power of the stereotype, can avoid specifying concrete and particular goals, which might jeopardize the miraculous consent of the ONWARDS- and UPWARDS-metaphor for PROGRESS. As this basic conceptual metaphor functions in German just as it does in English, the translator should find it hard to go wrong. And yet, the translation's choice (7b) of the word *Straße* for English *road* is exactly the wrong one here: *Weg* or *Strecke* are the German lexemes conventionally used in this metaphorical context. Let it be mentioned in passing that the rendering of the intended triple English "get there" as an acceptable "dort *ankommen*" first, followed by those unmotivated variations of "dort *hinkommen*" in the next sentence, and "dort *hingelangen*" in the last, is much less effective than the original, and even plain ugly.

- (8a) And where we are met with cynicism and doubts and those who tell us that we can't, we will respond with that timeless creed that sums up the spirit of a people: *Yes, we can.*
- (8b) Und wenn wir auf Zynismus und Zweifel stoßen und auf diejenigen, die sagen, wir können das nicht, dass wir dann mit jenem zeitlosen Glauben antworten, der den Geist eines Volkes zusammenfasst: *Ja, wir können.*

With excerpt (8) we have finally reached Obama's most famous soundbite. The motto of his election campaign, "*Yes, we can*", which he brings in again here towards the end of the speech (8a), is as simple as it is ingenious, and that for a number of reasons. First of all, what that slogan expresses semantically in its affirmative is the positive belief in one's own potential, one's own power. The plural is a most suggestive invocation of the collective, which remains unspecified – an enormous advantage for the creation of a consensual confidence. According to one's own conviction, a host of very different group affiliations can be understood: From the relatively small group of Afro-American civil rights activists, to the representatives of other suppressed minorities (such as, e.g., Hispanics), to the whole Democratic Party, or even the whole US-American people, the collective *WE* comprises them all according to demand, which may not even stop at the national borders of the United States. Owing to its prosodic form, the slogan is also most suitable to be repeated as a rhythmic *chant* by any huge chorus of shouters. In this it resembles most the German "*Jetzt geht's los*" chant, tried and tested in party conventions and political demonstrations as well as in football stadiums.

Textlinguistically, one more wiliness resides in the fact that this "*Yes, we can*" also functions as a syntactically complete short answer to a corresponding question. And what is more, the simple English *Yes* does not only mean *Ja* in German, but, depending on context, it can also mean *Doch!* This is the case if, just like in the text of Obama's speech (8a), the affirmative follows as a reply to a preceding negation, which was meant to insinuate inability: "those who tell us *that we can't*". Again, we are faced with a general denotational incongruity of the type granularity differential between English and German (cf. figure 3).

English	German
<i>yes</i>	<i>ja</i>
	<i>doch</i>

Figure 3: Granularity differential *yes* vs *ja*

The translation of the allegedly simple English *Yes* involves a decision between the contextually unrestricted *Ja* and its alternative *Doch*, which is only motivated after a preceding (at least implicit) negation. That this decision is inapplicable in English means another advantage for Obama's slogan: Adding to the absolutely positive affirmation, there

is that fair amount of defiance that resonates, a proud "in spite of everything", damped and packaged, though, in the unmarked *Yes* of "*Yes, we can*".

Taking into consideration that Obama had been using this slogan for many months during the election campaign, one should think that even German translators would have had enough advance notice to prepare themselves for a translation of this motto. All the more disconcerting is the effect of the "*Ja, wir können*" (8b), which seems to constitute rather the refusal of a translation. As an ungrammatical sequence it does not even meet minimal requirements, as in contrast to the English auxiliary verb *can*, its German equivalent *können* cannot end a sentence uncomplimented by an object. Much more suitable options would have been "Ja, wir schaffen das!" or "Doch, wir können das!"

3. Yes, He Can Do It Differently: "My fellow citizens!" – The Rhetoric of the Inaugurated and the Silence of the Translation

In order to exemplify the wide range of Obama's rhetoric, we will also analyse a number of excerpts (9-13) from the new American President's inaugural address delivered in Washington, D.C. on January 20th 2009. Again, all the examples quote as (a) the original source text (Obama 2009a), followed by (b) the German translation (Obama 2009b). Excerpt (9) presents the beginning of this speech:

- (9a) My fellow citizens: I stand here today humbled by the task before us, grateful for the trust you have bestowed, mindful of the sacrifices borne by our ancestors.
- (9b) Ich stehe heute hier, demütig angesichts der Aufgabe, die vor uns liegt, dankbar für das Vertrauen, das Sie mir geschenkt haben, und der Opfer gedenkend, die unsere Vorfahren auf sich genommen haben.

Different to his victory speech (1a), the newly sworn in President, speaking in front of the Capitol, chooses the formal address (9a) "*My fellow citizens*". This is followed by yet another perfect triad, marked by three repetitions of the same syntactical structure adjective/participle – preposition – noun phrase. That the German translation (9b) should ruin this triad by completely altering the structure in its third part, was all but inevitable, as "*eingedenk der Opfer*" would have been a very good and convincing option. That the translation fails to go for that option makes it reasonable to suspect that the translator may not even have noticed the rhetorical perfection in the structure of that passage.

But what has happened to "*My fellow citizens*"? The translation completely leaves out this term of address. But maybe this is done on purpose, and maybe even for rather good reasons. Because on closer inspection, the allegedly unproblematic English form of address presents a really complex case of denotational incongruency in comparison with German (cf. figure 4). The translation, just like a German politician in a similar situation, would be forced to make not just one, but a number of decisions: First, between the plain, but cordial

"*Liebe Mitbürger*" and the more formal "*Sehr geehrte Mitbürger*", a decision multiplied by the question if the result should or should not be preceded by the possessive pronoun *meine*. But that is not all: In times of political correctness in matters of gender, a further decision would need to be made, if a generic "*Mitbürger*" might have an unintended discriminatory effect, and therefore, to be on the safe side, would have to be amended to the phrase "*Mitbürgerinnen und Mitbürger*".

English	German
My fellow citizens	<i>Liebe (Mitbürgerinnen und) Mitbürger</i>
	<i>Sehr geehrte (Mitbürgerinnen und) Mitbürger</i>
	<i>Meine lieben (Mitbürgerinnen und) Mitbürger</i>
	<i>Meine sehr geehrten (Mitbürgerinnen und) Mitbürger</i>

Figure 4: Granularity differential *My fellow citizens* vs ?

With this series of decisions alone, the German manuscript for a similar speech would have to choose between eight options only for the term of address. It seems a safe bet, that in the drafting of political speeches in German in this day and age, quite some time and effort go into decisions of that nature. In case the translation had considered all of this, to come down under time pressure in favour of leaving out the addressing of the audience, it would hardly be fair to take it amiss. How much easier it is for the American President with his gender-neutral, and in all respects unmarked "*fellow citizens*"!

The next excerpt (10a), still from the opening section of the inaugural address, again creates pathos by way of conceptual metaphor:

- (10a) The words [of the oath] have been spoken during rising tides of prosperity and the still waters of peace. Yet, every so often, the oath is taken amidst gathering clouds and raging storms.
- (10b) Die Worte [des Eides] wurden gesprochen in den Fluten des Wohlstandes und den friedlichen Wassern des Friedens. Jedoch, gelegentlich wird der Eid auch inmitten sich zusammenbrauender Wolken und wütender Stürme gesprochen.

Even in the original text (10a), we are faced with quite a mixed metaphor, in which THE POLITICAL SITUATION of the US-American nation is compared with FORCES OF NATURE, or WEATHER CONDITIONS as source domain. In the first of the two sentences, the target domain depicts a positive situation of *prosperity* and *peace*. While the source domain image of *still waters* nicely serves that purpose, the image of *rising tides* is not unambiguously positive, but also has a threatening aspect, which does not fit in well here. The second sentence then, though it remains unexplicit as to the target scenario, represents the crisis at the time of speaking, drawing on the conventional imagery of *gathering clouds and raging storms*. As far as metaphors are concerned, the translation

(10b) is true to the original, but stylistically clumsy in two places: In the first sentence, the phrasing of "*friedliche* Wasser des Friedens" sounds awkward because of the unnecessary combination of *friedlich* ('peaceful') with *Frieden*, where "*ruhige* Wasser des Friedens" would have been more in line with the original and satisfying. And in the second sentence, Obama's parallel structure of *gathering clouds* and *raging storms* is lost because of the unsuitable reflexive form "*sich zusammenbrauender* Wolken", where the choice of "*aufziehender* Wolken" would have saved the original effect.

And the translator appears consistent in her disregard of the rhetorical finesse of the original speech. As evidence at least, we have yet another example in the following excerpt (11):

(11a) Today I say to you that the challenges we face *are real*. They *are serious* and they *are many*. [...] On this day, we gather because we have chosen hope *over* fear, unity of purpose *over* conflict and discord.

(11b) Heute sage ich Ihnen, dass die Herausforderungen, die vor uns liegen, *real sind*. Sie sind ernst, *und es gibt viele*. [...] An diesem Tag sind wir hier, weil wir die Hoffnung *über* Furcht gewählt haben, Einigkeit in unseren Zielen *anstelle von* Konflikt und Zwietracht.

Obama's characterization of the *challenges* in the first part of this excerpt (11a) uses another triad of the syntactical structure "*are* + adjective". In the second part of the original, the characterization of the alleged *choice* uses one more parallel construction, in which the favoured positive option and the disfavoured negative alternative are linked by the preposition *over*. Both of these rhetorical figures are highly effective, resulting in one of the most powerful passages in the whole speech. Looking at the translation (11b), though, we find that both of these figures are ruined and spoilt. In order to preserve Obama's triad, the translation first of all would have had to change the German syntax from a subclause with *dass* ('that-clause') to a main clause, because only this would result in the word order "*sind* + adjective". And the third leg of the triad, which is rendered here unnecessarily by a completely different construction "*und es gibt viele*", would be much improved if changed into "*und sie sind zahlreich*", which has the appropriate word order. In the second part of the excerpt, the translator's choice of two different prepositions, *über* and *anstelle von*, is as unmotivated as it disregards Obama's parallel construction with *over*.

After all these critical remarks, however, we can also give the translator some credit for one of the choices made. In contrast to the translation of Obama's victory speech analysed above, this translation of the inaugural speech uses the more formal of the T/V-pair of pronouns (cf. figure 2) as the general term of address for the audience: "Heute sage ich *Ihnen*, ..." (11b). The same choice, which already surfaced in example (9b) above, "*das Sie* mir geschenkt haben", is certainly the more appropriate of the two options (see the discussion of examples 5 and 6 above).

The next example (12a) features a simple but effective alliteration – *price* and *promise* – that is hard to capture in translation; and a triad of sentences starting with the construction "*This is ...*", which should be easy to rebuild in comparison:

- (12a) This is the *price* and the *promise* of citizenship. This is the source of our confidence – the knowledge that God calls on us to shape an uncertain destiny. This is the meaning of our liberty and our creed.
- (12b) Das ist der Preis und das *Versprechen* der *Staatsbürgerschaft*. Das ist der Ursprung unseres *Zutrauens* – das Wissen, dass Gott uns aufruft, eine ungewisse Zukunft zu gestalten. Das ist die Bedeutung unserer Freiheit und unser *Credo*.

And indeed, the translation (12b) at least manages to create a German sequence of three sentences starting with "*Das ist ...*". But, while we cannot blame the translator for losing the rhetorical figure of alliteration, we can certainly criticise the semantically unmotivated choice of words in this passage: From the blunt noun *Versprechen* instead of the contextually much more fitting *Verheißung*, and the far too bureaucratic term *Staatsbürgerschaft* instead of the intended *Bürgertum* or *Bürgersein*, to the semantic blunder of *Zutrauen* instead of the only possible lexeme *Zuversicht*, to an awkwardly archaic *Credo* instead of the more suitable noun *Überzeugung*, the translator must have been completely absent-minded at this stage, hitting an all time low.

The following excerpt (13) presents the final passage of the inaugural address:

- (13a) America. In the face of our common dangers, in this winter of our hardship, let us remember these timeless words. With hope and virtue, let us brave once more the icy currents, and endure what storms may come. Let it be said by our children's children that when we were tested, we refused to let this journey end, that we did not turn back nor did we falter; and with eyes fixed on the horizon and God's grace upon us we carried forth that great gift of freedom and delivered it safely to future generations.
- (13b) Amerika. Angesichts der gemeinsamen Bedrohungen, in diesem Winter unserer Bedrängnis, lasst uns dieser zeitlosen Worte gedenken. Mit Hoffnung und Tugend, lasst uns wieder den eisigen Strömungen trotzen und aushalten, was immer an Stürmen kommen mag. Lasst es von unseren Enkeln gesagt sein, dass wir uns weigerten, diese Reise zu beenden, als wir herausgefordert wurden, und dass wir uns nicht umdrehten oder zauderten, und dass wir, den Blick zum Horizont gerichtet und Gottes Gnade über uns, jenes große Geschenk der Freiheit vorantrugen und sie künftigen Generationen wohlbehalten weitergaben.

To round off his speech, Obama goes for the grand pathos, once more. Thus, as term of address he picks the simple *America*. This metonymy, in which THE CONTINENT or THE NATION stands for THE AUDIENCE, is certainly all-inclusive. Just for once, the translation (13b) finds an easy match. In crosscultural comparison, however, we might wonder why more than sixty years after the second World War, hardly any serious German politician would choose a similar form to address even a national audience: Unless coming from right wing extremists or nationalist partisans ("Deutschland, erwache!"), for German ears, *Deutschland* ('Germany') sounds just as out of place as *Europa* ('Europe'), and simply too bombastic.

In the remainder of this final passage, some of Obama's favourite themes are brought together again in dense combination: We revisit the conceptual metaphor of ADVERSE WEATHER CONDITIONS to depict the current crisis (cf. example 10), with expressions like *winter*, *icy currents* and *storms*. As remedies, *hope* and *virtue* are summoned up once more, and *God's grace* is called upon. Finally, we witness a creative elaboration of the JOURNEY metaphor (cf. example 7) as a cross-generational RELAY RACE, in which the precious FREEDOM of the target domain figures as the BATON: "*we refused to let this journey end, [...] we did not turn back nor did we falter; and with eyes fixed on the horizon and God's grace upon us we carried forth that great gift of freedom and delivered it safely to future generations.*"

In our final look at the translation (13b), let us not find fault with details such as the too mundane noun *Enkel* instead of the more emotional *Kindeskind*, which would fit better into Obama's pathos. But let it be said that this time, the translator manages to recreate the conceptual metaphors of the original without even getting any of the metaphorical details really wrong.

4. Coda: How Can He Dare?

After our analysis of two of Barack Obama's major speeches in the main sections of this paper, a final look at another kind of public performance will throw additional light on the stunning rhetorical range of this new type of politician.

On February 2nd 2009, a good ten days after his inauguration, US-President Obama in an interview for the CNN-network (CNN 02/02/2009a) comments on the failed nomination of senator Tom Daschle as Health Secretary as follows:

(14a) *I've screwed up.*

The polysemous phrasal verb *to screw up* has as its literal meaning 'to screw tight, tighten a screw'. In collocation with the noun *paper* it means 'to crumple up'. However, Obama uses the idiomatic expression in its metaphorical meaning, which in this case is the much more frequent and common meaning in all everyday contexts. According to the serious and

comprehensive *Langenscheidt* dictionary (Sinclair Knight 2008), example (14a) translates as:

(14b) Da hab ich *Scheiße gebaut*.

'There have I *shit built*'

In order to tone this down a little, the most vulgar expression of (14b) could be rephrased as *Mist gebaut*. Nevertheless, it would still remain an utterance to be placed not only in unmarked everyday language, but in a decidedly lower stylistic level, close to *slang*. And we as observers are left wondering anxiously: How can the President of the United States of America unashamedly adopt such a wrong tone? To understand the contrast better, imagine for a moment the German Chancellor or the Federal President with a corresponding utterance (14b) in a television interview: Utterly inconceivable! And yet, US-President Obama presumably has not accidentally made a mistake. Not quite three weeks later, on February 20th 2009 (CNN 02/20/2009b), looking back on that same failure in the formation of the cabinet in his early presidency, Obama explains his point in greater detail:

(15a) It was a self-induced injury. I think I *messed up*, I *screwed up*.

As if to emphasize that his earlier short utterance (14a) was not an accidental lapse, Obama in this retrospective explanation (15a) does not limit himself to a simple repetition of the incriminated utterance. Instead, he contextualizes and confirms his reaching out for those lower levels of the stylistic repertoire, by way of adding the near-synonym *mess up*. In German, the new statement as a whole could be rendered like this (15b):

(15b) Das war eine selbstverschuldete Verletzung. Ich meine, da hab ich *Mist gebaut*, da hab ich *Scheiße gebaut*.

The educated intellectual and brilliant rhetorician Obama may without doubt be regarded as a person with a high language awareness. If he makes utterances such as (14a) and (15a) in the public media, these are no accidental lapses – in marked contrast to his predecessor in office, who was notorious for his verbal slips. As is typical of some speakers with a very high linguistic competence, Obama's stylistic repertoire comprises the whole range, from highbrow academical sophistication to downright gutter language and slang, and he will masterfully put to his best use all kinds of registers across this scale. In the case at hand, the co-text of his additional explanation shows that he wanted that failed nomination of senator Daschle to be cleared out of the way as quickly as possible, in order to get going with his real political agenda. His taking of political responsibility for that failure, unmistakable in its drastic explicitness, presumably served this purpose more than anything else. Adding to this, it also set an example – admittedly an extreme one – of the improved openness and responsibility which Obama had announced during his election campaign. It was this openness, which in the US-American context made him appear as standing out from the unpopular customs established in Washington in almost 'revolutionary' fashion – a core item

in his comprehensive concept of *Change*. To conclude: Not only in regard to politics, but also in regard to language we can probably expect more remarkable innovations to come from Barack Obama. Maybe translators would do well to exercise their suppleness better.

5. Summary and Conclusion

We end our contribution with a very short summary of the main points shown in this case study. These were the following:

1. Obama's speeches are characterized by the ingenuous use of rhetorical devices. Examples analyzed include conceptual and linguistic metaphor and metonymy as well as pairs and triads of structures.
2. As examples of particular functions and purposes of these rhetorical devices we identified the inclusive addressing of the audience, the expression of emotional pathos, the creation of consent and confidence, and not least of all, the avoiding of precision.
3. Many of the speaker's achievements were seen to be lost in the German translation. Sometimes, this seemed due to sheer lack of proficiency. But sometimes the reason was found in general denotational incongruencies (mostly of the type granularity differential) between English and German.

By way of conclusion we can state here that, adding to the common toolkit of Cognitive Semantics, the study of denotational incongruencies can make a valuable contribution to an Applied and Critical Cognitive Linguistics.

As to linguistic relativity, it is worth noting that the denotational incongruencies discussed here were found between the two "Standard Average European (SAE)" (Whorf 1956: 138) languages English versus German. One conclusion to be drawn here is that in order to find examples of linguistic relativity we do not have to go to comparisons of distant, 'exotic' languages: Linguistic relativity starts at home.

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