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# Translation as a Rhetoric of Meaning

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**Keywords:** translation and rhetoric, comparative rhetoric, world view, rhetorical maps, compared deviations, LCC, HCC, meaning

From early romanticism to more recent post-structuralist and post-colonial studies, all the possibilities and impossibilities that are inherent in translation have fueled debate about authorship, intent, readership, functional equivalence, worldview, the building of national literatures, power differentials, ethics, and gender issues—among many other topics—and, of course, about the nature of “meaning” as the alleged sole legal tender of “all things translation.” However, translation has less often been scrutinized as a form of rhetorical transaction; fundamentally, all translations are attempts, in and of themselves, to persuade their readership of some degree of correspondence with their source. They have also been seen as covertly phatic texts; they call the audience’s attention to the existence of another text that translation identifies, mimics, annihilates, and resurrects. Translations advertise the existence of a text by, paradoxically, causing it to “disappear” in its original form and then by taking over its identity; a translation is the very illusion of reading Dostoyevsky or Borges while actually not doing so. However, the relationship between translation and rhetoric surpasses this ontological threshold of persuasion, by which readers of translations are prone to be persuaded of clean equivalence between texts.

In this paper I demonstrate how systematic inclusion of rhetoric-centered approaches in translation studies, and vice versa, would not only cross-fertilize these two fields, but would also help shed light on some areas where a monolingual focus has all too often imposed significant limitations on progress. First, I will suggest an *ad hoc* selection of classical and modern approaches to rhetoric and will reflect on their correspondence (or lack of it) with the scant focus that translation studies has placed on rhetoric. In the second section, I will provide a quick overview of what I define as a “rhetoric of meaning in translation studies.” There I will discuss how some of the core notions in translation theory are

significantly mediated by assumptions about meaning and language that cannot escape a degree of servitude to specific epistemological rhetoric(s). These tend either to underestimate or overgeneralize the effect of rhetoric within texts being translated.

In the third section of this paper, I will explore potential disciplinary concurrences through the field of comparative rhetoric in order to establish a basis for the translation of rhetorical devices that is not constricted solely by source language-dictated features. Finally, the discussion will turn in the fourth and last section to comparing how the study of rhetorical correspondence at the micro level in source and target languages and texts may be substantially hindered by significant structural disparities at the macro level that may not have been systematically or successfully incorporated into the wider theoretical framework of translation studies. I will provide specific examples and analyses illustrating these disparities in order to suggest potential avenues for further research incorporating rhetoric-centered approaches to translation studies.

## ***Ad Hoc* Definitions of Rhetoric for Translation Purposes**

In this section, I will summarily explore a number of theoretical stances in the field of rhetoric that would seem to impinge on translation and translation theory. An apology is due in the first place to scholars and experts in the field of rhetoric for the necessarily fragmentary nature of this section. In an attempt to provide an overview of a series of notions from a field that has been visited only occasionally and with more or less success by translation studies in the last few decades, the following wide-ranging review of concepts and schools of thought is bound to be perceived as hasty and sketchy. Well-versed scholars might rightfully claim an indiscriminate mix of areas, and perhaps even of reciprocally excluding theoretical paradigms.

*Captatio benevolentiae* aside, discourse in translation theory has indeed been permeated throughout the centuries by a defensive, apologetic tenor even in some of the classical texts in the discipline, such as Hieronymus's and Martin Luther's defenses of their translational strategies in their renditions of the Bible. In more recent times, it is not uncommon for seminal texts in the discipline to start out as overtly apologetic infringements into the territory of other fields or aggressive intrusions from other disciplines. Translation studies is an intrinsically interdisciplinary and sometimes also multidisciplinary field. It is inherently inclined

to embark on excursions beyond its perceived boundaries and to carry about incursions into remote fields. Like translation itself, translation studies tend not to be the center of things, but more often to be between things: between cultures, between languages, between peoples, between disciplines and intellectual paradigms—always between, never the center. The “in-between” is thus a frequent metaphorical denomination for the members of the translation and interpreting community that could very well apply to their disciplinary counterparts in academia (Pym, 2012, 13-35).

As a relatively new field of scholarship, translation and interpreting studies has an intrinsic need to draw from well-established fields, linguistics, cultural studies, psycholinguistics, anthropology, pragmatics, literary studies, second language acquisition, comparative grammar, terminology, lexicography, and philosophy among others. This seems connatural to the field’s ability to develop and grow as an academic discipline and area of inquiry beyond the plane of professional education (commonly and misleadingly known as “translator and interpreter training”). The only possible regret in such radical interdisciplinarity may be the inexplicable neglect of visiting other, perhaps closer, familiar and compatible grounds. Rhetoric and translation studies have regrettably been one of those “reciprocally ignorant neighbors.”

During nearly perfect decade-based progressions, and almost in Kuhnian terms, epistemological paradigms in translation studies have been explored, never completely exploited, and often rendered *passé* by subsequent “incommensurable” and sometimes self-excluding disciplinary turns (Pym, 2010). Within that relentless forward movement, however, as the next section will show, efforts in translation studies and translation theory have swung—pendulously or decidedly—between micro-textual frontal-assault tactics and macro-textual overarching envelopments in a way that is reminiscent of the “big rhetoric” vs. “little rhetoric” debate, by which rhetoric as a discipline debated whether it should be entitled to push the envelope of its traditional limits and make inroads into the epistemic questioning of other disciplines (Ingraham, 2015, 8). In a similar way, epistemological shifts in translation studies have taken the discipline from operating at close quarters with linguistics into testing itself against the grain of historic, cultural, sociological, and cognitive considerations. This pendulum-like movement has been characterized by Umberto Eco as a debate between the skeptical-holistic argument and the postulate of a perfect language (Eco, 2001, 220-221). The first pole focuses on the impossibilities of translation and is typically instantiated as a belligerent revisionism about long-accepted “commonsensical” assertions about

translation. Almost as militantly, the second argument rejoices in descriptively mapping or prescriptively educating about all the possibilities that translation entails.

The secular assumption that “translation is about meaning”—and its epistemological nemesis, in which “translation is a matter that undermines the notion of meaning,” may be a convenient starting point in the search for areas of convergence between both disciplines. The link between meaning and rhetoric has been described by the American literary theorist Kenneth Burke as follows: “Wherever there is persuasion, there is rhetoric. And wherever there is ‘meaning’ there is persuasion” (Burke, 1969, 172). Under this understanding, the dealings of translation with meaning cannot ignore the deep impingements that both translation and meaning have on rhetoric.

There is, however, a need to be selective in picking and choosing useful theoretical frameworks and methodologies from different disciplines (and not necessarily compatible ones in every case) that one deems to be productive in one’s own field. An inclusive and overarching definition of rhetoric—of contemporary rhetoric, that is—would draw concurring viewpoints from authors such as Burke—meaning is always persuaded (Burke, 1969)—or Friedrich Nietzsche—language is always allegorical (Nietzsche, 1989, 23-25, 67). From a more modern approach, such as the multidisciplinary one provided by semiotics, other authors have posited that rhetoric functions as a repository of commonly accepted “truths” and that rhetoric is pleasurable to the persuaded (Eco, 1999, 167-173; Barthes, 1985, 132). From the field of linguistics or the related subfields of pragmatics, philosophy of language, and comparative rhetoric, language has been considered a form of energy (or “perlocutionary force”) addressed to the goal of physically and/or psychologically modifying the environment of the speaker (Austin, 1975; Nietzsche, 1989; Quine, 1960; Kennedy, 1998; Burke, 1965). Such a selection of notions will lend itself to a more comfortable alignment with one or more diametrically opposed paradigms in translation studies. Consequently, the discipline has tended to recruit a myriad of theoretical bodies to sustain its frequently opposing causes and goals.

More culturally preoccupied, Eco also views rhetoric as a sort of repository of “acquired formulas,” not just under the appearance of rhetorical devices—which would be “linguistic techniques”—but also a symbolic repository that sinks its roots into commonplaces accepted by a community of speakers (Eco, 1999, 173). This approach takes us back to Roland Barthes’s *Mythologies*, in which the author views rhetoric as linked to ideological domination and to

the imposition of constructs that pass themselves off as “natural” and inevitable, or at least as “probable premises” (Barthes, 1970).

Consistent with a view that equates the symbolic with the linguistic and thus the rhetorical, Burke states,

[...] rhetoric as such is not rooted in any past condition of human society. It is rooted in an essential function of language itself, a function that is wholly realistic, and is continually born anew; the use of language as a symbolic means of inducing cooperation in beings that by nature respond to symbols (Burke, 1969, 43).

Burke’s observation suggests again that, at one extreme, meaning is always persuaded. That is, it corresponds to an enlistment of the persuader’s reasoning and the traditionally stable and obvious referential value conferred on “Meaning”—with a capital “M”—and therefore always depends on a purely dialectical question; it is “meaning” for me precisely to the extent that it is meaning for someone else. Meaning is not just established necessarily through otherness, but is also defined in its nature as a struggle with the other—and again, not just necessarily a cooperative struggle, as is frequently purveyed by pragmatics.

Nietzsche refuted the autonomous nature of rhetoric, claiming that its apparatus is merely a refinement that takes the basic mechanisms of language themselves perpetually to the extreme, departing in an endless motion from original referentiality—a long-lost referentiality and, actually, a never truly existent one beyond sheer contextual deixis:

The *tropes*, the nonliteral significations, are considered the most artistic means of rhetoric. But, with respect to their meanings, all words are tropes in themselves, and from their very beginning. Instead of what truly takes place, they represent a sound image, which fades away in time (Nietzsche, 1989, 23).

For Nietzsche there is scant difference, if any, between words proper and tropes, inasmuch as there is not much of a difference between regular speech and the so-called rhetorical figures (Nietzsche, 1989, 25).

For Nietzsche, and subsequently others, the formation of a rhetorical expression is a question of power; as a violation of the linguistic norm, it can be rejected as an error—and the speaker thus perceived as incompetent—or can be welcomed as an innovation and embraced, thereby becoming a new species of “rhetorical device” that ultimately emerges from the authority that proposes it.

The resonances of this stance with pragmatics and the notion of “perlocutionary force” are hardly escapable. Also, the notion of “violation of the norm” brings us closer to generally accepted principles in more classical rhetorical terms (deviation or markedness) that have left a significant footprint in translation studies in the form of another classical binary confrontation in translation theory: that of domesticating and foreignizing translation.

How does translation transact with the fundamentally rhetorical nature of text? If rhetoric binds to meaning and thus becomes a meaning-making (i.e., cognitive) operation, what would be the potential contribution of cognition-centered approaches the effects that are activated by rhetorical devices in texts of various sorts? How do such devices travel (or not travel) across languages and worldviews when texts undergo translation? The traditional dialectics of “lost and found in translation,” which are typically focused at either a semantic or a referential level, is likely to be insufficient to describe these complex processes in depth. Rhetoric matters.

## **The Rhetoric of Meaning in Translation Studies**

The discussion will turn here to reviewing how the history of translation theory, and more recently, of translation studies as a systematized field of inquiry, has been permeated by specific conceptual paradigms and discourses, each with a rhetoric of their own, that may paradoxically have evaded the importance of rhetoric itself in the definition of their object of study. In that sense, the conundrums listed in the previous section roughly outline the struggle that translation studies confronts in establishing a relationship vis-à-vis meaning, inasmuch as the long-standing “token of truth” (translation as a successful or unsuccessful transaction of meaning) frequently goes against the grain of uncertainties about “the meaning of meaning.” The relativistic, non-essentialist approach to meaning that contemporary rhetoric also purveys has proved very fertile within a number of post-structuralist approaches to literary studies and translation studies. However, this approach has frequently failed to move beyond the stumbling block of a sterile debate about the possibility or impossibility of translation (Dávila-Montes, 2012, 51). In moving toward a complete incorporation of language into the realm of rhetoric, a profound questioning of language’s strictly referential function emerges, and therefore a rift gradually appears within the notion of a “clean” referential value of meaning that is detached

from interpersonal (intercultural and interlinguistic, in the case of translation) power relations. Inevitably, a connection between meaning and persuasion is again drawn, which would bring us to the dialectical approach of Hegel—specifically to the master-slave discourse—applied to the areas of study commonly known as “translation and power” and “post-colonial translation studies.”

Let us first take a few steps back and survey what correspondences or lack of it exist between the summary of concepts listed above and the several attempts (rather indirect ones, as we will see) that translation scholars have put forward in order to benefit from the intellectual edifice of rhetoric in its broadest possible definition. There is a whole, yet rather selective, “rhetoric of meaning” in translation studies.

Contemporary translation studies began to consolidate as a theoretical body in the 1950s, with efforts to tackle, sometimes piecemeal, the singularities of translation: a communicational activity with a history of several millennia that had, nevertheless, a meager academic tradition outside the boundaries of what was known as “grammar-translation” (or the use of translation as a primitive language-acquisition tool). In an interconnected world, with an increasing presence of translation as a respected intellectual activity, and in the midst of the exultant parade of scientific positivism of the mid-twentieth century, translation scholars resorted to linguistics and to “microscope-like” approaches to the object of their study in a way that may be comparable to what has been described as “little rhetoric.” The misleadingly named “*stylistique comparée*” inaugurated a tradition of language-pair scrutiny of morphological, lexical, and syntactical correspondences in an attempt to draw a meticulous map of the infinite spider’s web of relationships spanning out from the minute comparison of grammars and languages (Vinay and Darbelnet, 1958). Still influenced by the heavy “grammar-translation” tradition, efforts frequently came, almost inevitably, to anticlimactic screeching halts when approaching the boundaries of the sentence, or the paragraph, at the very most.

Still within “conventional” linguistics, but with a strong generativist import, authors such as John Catford laid out in the 1960s and 70s the groundwork for mathematical, formula-like abstractions that apparently elevated the previous head-to-head comparisons to the stature of a—at least potentially—computerized process (Catford, 2000 [1965]). From that point on, the influence of computer-oriented thought in the development of translation theories has periodically permeated advances in the practical application of translation technologies, and also in the



incorporation of statistical analysis in translation-oriented research. To that era of definitional struggles belongs the manifesto-like 1988 paper “The Name and Nature of Translation Studies,” which notoriously claimed full-fledged status for the discipline within the empirical sciences (Holmes, 2000).

Specific cultural preoccupations and advances in communication studies had by then already overcome limitations in the search for formal correspondence and had fueled semantically based theories of dynamic equivalence, such as those stemming from the works of Eugene Nida, or revolving around text type and textual functions, e.g., Hans Vermeer’s *skopos* theory (Nida, 1964; Schäffner, 2001). Pragmatics in general, and most significantly, the notion of meaning as a social construct, such as in Paul Grice’s theory of meaning or Dan Sperber and Deirdre Wilson’s relevance theory, provided a foothold for a number of theoretical “raids” from translation studies that brought home a bounty of new directions in research, systemically washing out the interest of previously accepted constructs that had enjoyed a relatively prestigious status (Grice, 1957; Serber and Wilson, 1990).

From a purely textual approach, textual linguistics and discourse analysis opened the door to a wave of yet wider text- and ideology-based approaches in the 1990s, such as that of Basil Hatim and Ian Mason (Hatim and Mason, 1990). Strong, pedagogically and process-oriented research endeavors began to benefit from the widespread use of computers by translators and from the ability to register keystroke logs, record every operation conducted on the screen, and even eye-track the gaze of the translating human, guinea pig-like, subjects. Also, through corpus linguistics, the statistical comparison of translations, their source texts, and non-translated original texts has generated the ability to compile massive occurrences at the micro level and to extrapolate them to wider horizons. The rhetoric of translation studies adopted discourses of broader scope, including some with universalist claims and others with political and historical concerns. And yet, many of the achievements of these empirically oriented methodologies could not circumvent the epistemological shortcoming of accepting the nature of meaning (whichever nature of meaning) as a given, as a guaranteed starting point for every construct to grow from. A robust rhetoric of empiricism in translation studies seemed to have validated James Holmes’s claim that, “Translation studies is, as no one I suppose would deny, an empirical discipline” (Holmes, 2000, section 3.1).

From the opposite direction, in a way that might perhaps be labeled “deductive” rather than “inductive,” Nietzsche’s equation of

language and rhetoric and Jacques Derrida's incursions into translation from the fields of philosophy and literary criticism fostered a school of thought in translation studies with strong ties to deconstruction and social criticism (Derrida, 1985). The study of power relations in translation and the history of translation as a necessary participant in power dynamics provided fertile ground for overarching discussions, somewhat close to the quarters of "big rhetoric." With a strong influence from Marxist and psychoanalytical theories, objectivity of meaning is presented as illusory and always subject to a set of social, interpersonal, intercultural, political, and hegemonic factors. Thinkers such as Walter Benjamin, Pierre Bourdieu, or Michel Foucault are invoked, and discussion extends the epistemological preoccupations of translation studies to areas that had traditionally belonged to metaphysics, literary criticism, or sociological theory. With the eminently symbolic value of language now a given, the definition of translation is approached as a study of its metaphors (St. André, 2010). Translation is considered a tool for unveiling the unstable nature of meaning, as well as a "living proof" of epistemic relativism, thus incorporating social and gender agendas, political discourse, and literary activism. Significantly rooted in these premises, a "cultural turn" in translation studies took place, followed by a "sociological turn" in which meaning ceases to be the unquestioned currency of every translational activity and in which translation and its paradoxes become a battering ram against conventional wisdom.

In a more cognitivist and constructivist vein, but drawing on post-structuralist semiotics, translation is also seen as an interlinguistic meaning-making process with a focus on interpretive and authorial agency rather than on semantic transfer. Every meaning-making operation is seen as the notional byproduct of a perpetual process of symbolic action known as "semiosis," by virtue of which the endless substitution of a sign by another sign is everything per se that meaning is: a *dynamis* of permanent replacement of signs. Viewed in this light, translation is typically heavily taxed on account of the expectation that it is a substitution that does not substitute but equates (Dávila-Montes, 2012, 48-51). In this approach translation can also be considered one of the foremost examples of semiosis. A target text is a sign that replaces a source text and signifies it, and therefore ascribes itself to the ranks of meaning-making operations par excellence. In this light, then, meaning ceases to be "the object" of translation, and translation becomes the very essence of meaning.

## **Comparative Rhetoric and Translation Studies: A Detour of Meaning by Way of the Enthymeme’s “Short-cut”**

This section will examine areas of disciplinary concurrence in the fields of translation studies and rhetoric, most specifically, in the area of comparative rhetoric as a robust intersection between the two. While translation traditionally needs to “mind” a wide array of factors in order successfully to meet communicative expectations, the study of disparate rhetorical practices in different cultures and/or languages has not necessarily taken a center stage position in translation studies, at least not in a clear, explicit way. This section will therefore explore how the notion of “meaning-making” as an object/goal of both communicative acts (translation and rhetoric) can provide a solid ground for reciprocal disciplinary growth. I will look into relatively recent meaning-oriented cognitive approaches to rhetoric that consider it from a neurolinguistics perspective. I will reflect on a specific rhetorical device, the enthymeme: a pervasive mechanism in a myriad of languages and rhetorical traditions, as an illustration of a potential comparative basis for a systematic study of the translation of rhetoric.

Recent approaches to rhetoric have drawn from cognitive science and cognitive linguistics, establishing—with strong and frequently ignored psychoanalytical echoes—that the intrinsically rhetorical nature of language mirrors the fundamental structure of human cognition (Lakoff and Johnson, 1999). Neurolinguistics has described “meaning” as dynamic neural connections between different areas in the sensorimotor regions of the brain *and* the regions in which subjective experience resides. In a manner that recalls the same approach, contemporary psychoanalysis proposes meaning as the unstable intersection between the imaginary and symbolic orders of the human psyche (Librecht, 2001, 198). These are, roughly in semiotic terms, the iconic and the symbolic, which in turn can be seen as the activity happening in different regions of the brain. In many instances, these approaches describe the mechanisms of cognition as primarily metonymic—metonymy understood as the trope of contiguity and displacement—*or* metaphoric. Whereas metonymic connections relate notions in the same domain or “cognitive space,” metaphoric connections (true “new meaning”) relate notions “located” in different domains or “cognitive spaces.” The connections between cognition/meaning and language/rhetoric surface in a way that seems not just narrative or pictorial—as in *we need to use metaphors to talk about language and cognition*—but structural, telling us what language and cognition are, as in *tropes are the manifestation—in the*

*‘material’ linguistic surface—of the very mechanisms of deeper neural, and thus also material, activity.*

There is a moderate claim to universalism in George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, but in spite of their cautious hedging, the simple fact that their proposals were initially posed within and stemmed from research developed in a monolingual scientific paradigm (that is, English-speaking academia) speaks volumes about the epistemological limitations that these proposals are binding themselves to, precisely when they are lucubrating about language (and not just “one” language) and human cognition (Lakoff and Johnson, 1999, 284). It also speaks volumes about how much translation studies may contribute to expanding and commenting on the assertions that come out of these and similar theoretical bodies regarding language and rhetoric. Nothing in the alleged universalism of the above-mentioned theories or the notion of an “embodied mind” contradicts the foreseeable possibility that different cultures have developed different rhetorical/cognitive refinements, or at least have privileged some mechanisms, whether universal or not, above others (see Lakoff and Johnson, 1999).

Translation has frequently been seen as a text about a text. Within the functionalist school, for example, translations have been seen as “[I]nformation... about information originally offered in another language” (Schäffner, 1998, 236). Such information is conveyed overtly or covertly (House, 1981). So, when we talk about translations of advertising, for example, we consider persuasion to be the desired effect of a metatext—a text about a text—to the extent that it produces in the target audience “similar effects” to those of the source text, most desirably in a “covert” fashion (i.e. not revealing the fact that the target text is actually a translation). These effects (or rhetorical value) are achieved by methods known to be substantially different in disparate advertising environments and linguistic traditions. It has been discussed by several studies and language pairs for the translation of advertising: transporting every single rhetorical or linguistic device from source to target, even if it were to be syntactically possible, would likely be highly unsuccessful in achieving such persuasive effects (Al-Shehari, 2004; Bueno García, 2000; Dávila-Montes, 2008; Guidère, 2000, 2001, 2003; Shakir 1995; Torresi, 2010; Valdés Rodríguez, 2004). In more general terms, conventional wisdom in translation practices has long established that perfectly valid and viable microstructures in both the source and target languages can be carried over from one to the other every time they appear in a text and still produce highly unnatural renditions from the wider perspective of a macro-textual approach.

The question, then, is: Does a given tolerated violation of the norm as a rhetorical principle work the same way in different languages and cultures? The answer, well-known in both translation studies and comparative rhetoric, is “no.” The supposed basic rhetorical principle that equates rhetoric instantiations to tolerated violations of a norm might vary considerably in the degree (or direction) of transgression within different linguistic traditions. Moreover, it may vary in the level of tolerance for violations or types of violations, or even in the very “normality” (or frequency) of the norm.

As described in the previous section, the Western tradition in translation theory has provided ample focus on contrastive approaches by establishing systematic comparisons between languages at the grammatical levels (lexical, morphological, and syntactic) and has made inroads in comparative discourse analysis and even in incorporating non-traditional grammars into its methodologies, such as Michael Halliday’s systemic functional grammar. Thus, multiple efforts have been dedicated to language-pair-based studies (Pym, 2016). However, these studies are all too often restricted in their range, or at least significantly restricted in their scope, sometimes because of the very nature of their grammatical meta-language, which is usually based on Western-language grammars (Niranjana, 1992, 34-35), and hence on the Latin tradition from which they stem (Dons, 1971). At the macro level, discourse analysis has frequently stumbled on the specificity of case-based studies, or on the implied ethnocentricity of Robert Kaplan’s “cultural thought patterns” (Kaplan, 1966). Muriel Saville-Troike cautions against falling into a biased “ethnocentric labeling” when attempting to comparatively describe syntax, discourse, and rhetorical devices as cultural artifacts (Saville-Troike, 2002, 151-153). Nonetheless, comparative rhetoric, viewed as the comparison of rhetorical strategies in different languages, is now a several-decades-old discipline. Contrastive studies, bound as they are by the very nature of the object they endeavor to study (language) and by the main tool used to achieve such an endeavor (also language), typically find their most productive expressions inductively, working upward from case studies and resorting to the one legitimate tool within its epistemological limits: proof by contrast. While such contrapositions may have merit and import when contrasting relatively close languages (since degrees of possible correspondence can be frequently found at many grammatical and sometimes morphological levels), a contrastive comparison of languages belonging to more distant phyla becomes increasingly

difficult, if not at times utterly pointless (Dávila-Montes, 2008, 491-493).

The alleged universalism of some of the rhetorical stances described in the previous pages may suggest that a comparison of rhetorical strategies and their frequencies can provide a more even-handed basis for contrastive or comparative studies of languages, and hence for the study of translations between specific language pairs. Within the field of comparative rhetoric, George A. Kennedy presents an interesting study of a number of aspects of oratory and rhetoric in ancient China—and in other eras and civilizations—in comparison with the Classical Greek tradition. He found that although persuasive Chinese political discourse has a macro-textual structure similar to the Western one—introduction, narrative, argument, and conclusion—it is, nonetheless, based on different values (Kennedy, 1998, 141-166). Classical Chinese rhetoric avoids emotive exhortation (*pathos*) and relies on the authority of the orator as an argument in itself (*ethos*). According to Kennedy, discursive brilliance in the Chinese tradition submits to the supremacy of honesty and sincerity; logical argumentation is mostly inductive in nature, while deductive argumentation is relegated to a secondary position and is mainly enthymemic in form (Kennedy, 1998, 151). The “secondary role” that Kennedy identifies in enthymemes within the Chinese rhetorical tradition poses a substantial contradiction to the central function of enthymemes in Western rhetoric, which I will discuss in the following paragraphs.

Let us scrutinize enthymemes as rhetorical devices identified in a wide range of very disparate languages in an attempt to unveil the reason for their potentially across-the-board validity as a cognitive operation. Barthes, following Aristotle, established that enthymemes are a rhetorical device eminently based on identification and articulated according to a principle of verisimilitude or plausibility of premises; an enthymeme is defined as being an incomplete syllogism (Barthes, 1985, 130-1). The enthymeme is said to be “a more economical discourse that appeals to the intelligence of the recipient” and implicitly invites him or her to fill in meaning (Beristáin, 2006, 173, my translation).

The classic example of the enthymeme is reduced to the famous expression, “All men are mortal. Socrates is a man. Socrates is mortal.” Yet an “incomplete” expression of this syllogism implies participation on the part of the receiver: “All men are mortal so Socrates is mortal.” That Socrates is a man is understood. Enthymemes, by omitting one of the premises of the syllogism, appeal to what already exists—that is, to identification. However, in

regard to their theme/rheme structure, enthymemes propose a topic that is accepted by consensus: “All men are mortal.”

The enthymeme’s destination (new information) is the conclusion—“Socrates is mortal”—but it may or may not imply information that is truly new for the recipient. Whether it does or not is not necessarily relevant to the persuasive process since, new or old, the information must be turned into “persuaded” meaning; strictly speaking, it is a matter not of contributing new information, but of convincing the audience of the soundness of that information, regardless of whether it is new or old. What, then, has taken place between premise and conclusion? Apparently nothing, as the second term of the syllogism is omitted. Yet it is precisely this omission that is the key to the enthymeme’s persuasive process. It identifies “A” (mortality) with “C” (Socrates) by virtue of “B” (Socrates is a man) but without going through “B”—omitting that step. So what happens with “B”? It is left in the hands of the listener. In pragmatic terms, this is a sort of “implicature,” but semiotically speaking, the listener is charged with the responsibility of “reconstructing” the syllogism, and he or she is invited to establish a relationship—or, as Lakoff and Johnson express it, to establish a [metaphorical] connection—between two elements from different areas (Lakoff and Johnson, 1999).

The connection created is not a real connection but a simulacrum of one. If we said, “All cats are mortal, and therefore Socrates is mortal,” the implicature would be that Socrates is a feline. In that case, an authentic connection between two initially separate pieces of information would be produced: “The speaker owns or knows of a cat that happens to share its name with the Greek philosopher.” Although the premise omitted in the original enthymeme (“Socrates is a man”) already exists as this second premise (“B”), it is omitted precisely because it is taken as a “probable premise” or “consensus truth.” Thus, the enthymeme triggers the mechanism of the metaphorical connection between two regions that are, in fact, already connected from the beginning: “man” and “Socrates.” It becomes a sort of false activation of the cognitive mechanism; the mechanism is in fact produced—the listener must make the connection for the syllogism to work—and yet it is produced with elements that are already connected beforehand—that is, with elements that are already identified with each other. Cognitively speaking, we could say that enthymemes attempt to demonstrate movement by revving up the engine of a car that has no wheels and has already arrived at its destination. The enthymeme’s persuasive efficacy comes from its ability to incorporate in a single rhetorical device both metaphorical and

metonymic functions—that is, the symbolic and the iconic intersecting: meaning. This does not mean that an enthymeme should be articulated based on what is called, *strictu sensu*, “metaphor” or “metonymy”; there is very little metaphor in “All men are mortal.” Quite the contrary, we are speaking of metaphorical and metonymic “cognitive functions.” It is from the intersection of those functions that meaning is produced. The trick is that “meaning” was already there; enthymemes just pull the rabbit out of an “empty hat full of rabbits.” Moreover, this trick is re-enacted in a multiplicity of languages, as we will see next.

As opposed to the lack of fit in the array and assembly of rhetorical devices within discourse that Kennedy purports reveal at the macro level, at the micro level the apparently universal fit of some structures would, perhaps, help to pinpoint common correspondences between languages that are typically translated without much of a thought: that is, with an effortless assumption of neat, equivalent correspondence in their rhetorical efficacy (Kennedy, 1998). A more specific example is the Latin construction “*non solum [...] sed etiam [...]*” (not only A but also B). The structure is similar to that of the enthymeme, except that the second premise is made explicit through a double negative (“not” and “only”) that first cancels and then activates it. “Only” has negational value because “only A” implies “not C, nor D ... nor X, nor Y, nor Z,” only “A.”

Through the construction “*non solum A sed etiam B*,” “B” is communicated, but the objective is in fact to reinforce the validity of A. Thus, in saying that a car is “not only fast but also fuel efficient,” the efficiency argument, whether true or not, has an initial informational value, but it is the speed argument that is inherently persuasive because it instills in the receiver a meta-implicature: “the speed of this vehicle is a given.” It is a “meta-implicature” because what is omitted is not necessarily objective information (the speediness of the car, which is explicitly stated) but information on how to interpret that information (“this vehicle’s speed is a given, and you ought to accept it, too. I am talking from authority and thus you are accepting not just the information about the speed, but my authority”).

The double negative presents the information in such a way that an immediate identification must be established: “Not only is it fast” implies “I know that you already know it is fast.” The listener may not already be aware of this particular vehicle’s velocity-related virtues, but in presenting the information in this way, persuaders create a dynamic of “it is a fact known to all; you had better believe it, too. Socrates is a man, and this car is fast.” The expression is



found in a wide range of languages within a varied number of families, including Romance (Italian: *non solo ma anche*; Spanish: *no sólo sino también*; Catalan: *no només sinó també*; French: *non seulement mais encore*); Anglogermanic (English: *not only ... but also...*; German: *nicht nur sondern auch*), and also Semitic (Arabic: ليس فقط بل أيضا), Indo-Iranian (Persian: نه تنها لیکن همجنین), Kurdish (نه به س به لی ههمینجه), Altaic (Turkish: *na bas lakin ham*), Ural-Altaic (Japanese: だけじゃなくて – ... *dake ja nakute*), or Sino-Tibetan (Chinese: 不仅 ... 而且... – *bujin ... erquie*, or already in the Classical period before the introduction of Western-inspired forms: 不唯 ... 而 – *bù wéi ... ér*; or 不獨 ... 而 – *bù dú ... ér*).<sup>1</sup>

In addition, the etymological distance between the words in the phrase, even among closely related languages such as the Romance family, seems to reinforce the idea that these linguistic constructions are not a matter of a simple linguistic idiom. If it were so, there would be more similarity in the etymology of the logical positions they occupy. On the contrary, and very much as with enthymemes, it seems that this expression is a sort of persuasive cognitive “automatism” triggered by the invocation of the previously mentioned principles. Even in the unlikely case that this structure has been systematically transferred between such a range of cultures and languages through influences or translations, the fact that an expression with such a relatively complex logical structure (negation + element of exclusivity + adversative particle + emphatic affirmation) is commonly used in so many languages as a persuasive device is clearly relevant because of its demonstrated enticement power and because of the fact that it can point toward fundamental cognitive structures.

The question that arises from these premises (existence of enthymemes in a given language pair and different values of enthymemes in the two rhetorical traditions) seems inevitable: They can obviously be translated. But when must they be?

## **Translated Rhetoric: From Particular Differences to Far-Flung Limits**

The discussion in this section will turn to outlining plausible approaches to the translation of rhetorical devices within texts

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<sup>1</sup> I thank Drs. Alexander Dawoody (for Turkish, Arabic, Kurdish, and Farsi), Sara Rovira (Chinese), and Anne Helene Suárez (Chinese) for this information.

belonging to two different rhetorical traditions, paying close attention to how the structural (grammatical) differences between languages curtail a viable transaction of all possible rhetorical devices in a text. I will also consider briefly the effect of the opposite circumstance: when all rhetorical devices in a segment can (grammatically) be translated into the target text. I contend that a mapping of rhetorical-cultural values may be the primary requirement in attempting to answer the question of when a rhetorical device that exists in both languages (target and source) can be reasonably translated or, perhaps, when it rather should not be.

Cultural studies has proposed a wide classification of cultures based on their enlistment on a Low Context Communication (LCC) and High Context Communication (HCC) scale. David Katan discusses Edward Hall's theories on the different relationships with context found across cultures (Hall, 1983; Katan, 2004, 245-260). In LCC, the communication process tends to take place with a greater degree of contextual independence, whereas HCC more fully incorporates contextual matters into discourse and behavior. In ranking cultures typifying these parameters (which Katan cites from other authors, claiming that they do not correspond to any other statistic he knows of [Katan, 2004, 253]) Swiss-German culture would be positioned as the ultimate example of LCC, fitting well "the stereotype of exacting precision and detailed information" (Katan, 2004, 253), closely followed by German and Scandinavian cultures. At the other extreme (HCC) is Japanese culture—supposedly satisfying "our stereotype of their inscrutable culture" (Katan, 2004, 253)—followed by Arabic and Latin American cultures. Setting aside for the moment the element of cultural stereotyping inherent in this approach, and also overcoming a reasonable resistance to extreme dichotomies, we find it interesting that such a distinction, if accurate, is necessarily instantiated by the nature of the rhetorical strategies used in each culture.

We need to keep in mind Muriel Saville-Troike's caution against ethnocentric labeling, but Katan summarizes the contributions of various authors and establishes an interesting set of concepts based on the classification system described earlier (Katan, 2004). According to this classification, an operative mode of low contextualization places emphasis on text, facts, direct modes, coherence, substance, rules, and monochromy. High contextualization emphasizes context, relationships/feelings, indirect modes, flexibility in meaning, social and personal appearance, circumstances, and polychromy (Katan, 2004, 220).

Katan moves on to paraphrase Hall and other authors from the field of neuroscience who propose a relationship between two “cultural tendencies,” the lateralization of brain function, and task specialization in the two hemispheres (left: verbal, logical, sequential, symbolic, temporal, linear, and detail-based skills; right: nonverbal, spatial, musical, creative, holistic, emotional, imaginative, pattern-based, and visualization skills) (Katan, 2004, 257). This model is too simplistic and cannot solely account for the complexity of the processes that constitute culture and their rhetorical instantiation at every moment and in every environment. However, a conception of rhetoric understood not only as “persuasive discourse,” but also as materials instantiating deep cognitive mechanisms that connect different regions and functions of the brain, might provide plausible explanations in this model. These would account for differences found among languages and cultures, not only in the *Weltanschauung*, or worldviews, but also in signaling the substantially different rhetorical strategies favored by each cultural tradition.

Empirical studies through magnetic resonance imaging that compare brain activity in bilingual individuals in English and Spanish seem to sustain the claim that “neural language processing differs across their two languages” and that

[...] both monolinguals (in one language) and bilinguals (in each language) showed predicted increases in activation in classic language areas [...], with any neural differences between the bilingual’s two languages being *principled and predictable based on the morphosyntactic differences* between Spanish and English [...] suggesting that there may be a functional separation of a bilingual’s two languages in one brain *based on the formal linguistic properties of each given languages* (Kovelman, Baker and Petitto, 2008, emphasis mine).

If we view rhetorical devices as complex mechanisms stemming from morphosyntax, it is conceivable that rhetorical differences between languages have some sort of reciprocation with the different cognitive or neural “mappings” that different cultures feature or define.

In the previous sections I have attempted to lay out a background from which several questions seem naturally to spring: What happens with the rhetorical value of a text when this text is translated? What happens with a text at the macro level once micro-level structures have been accurately transported from the

target to the source? What happens with the rhetorical value of the target text when a mix of successful and unsuccessful micro-level transports takes place, as is known to occur in nearly every single piece of translation exceeding the length of a few words? Can, perhaps, the old dialectics of “lost and found in translation” be mapped more efficiently from an economy of rhetoric rather than from the elusive, highly unaccountable economics of meaning?

The last question entails a significant shift from the traditional and contemporary paradigms in translation studies, by which old debates on translatability and untranslatability could be approached from the scrutiny of the structural metonymic and metaphorical choices—lexicalized landscapes—that different languages lay out: not a mapping of morphological or syntactic disparities, whether lexical or semantic, on the micro level or a depiction of discursive discrepancies at the macro level, but rather a face-to-face confrontation of rhetorical gains, losses, and transformations. This shift may contribute to clarify the struggles of translation with the notion of meaning, given the premise that meaning and rhetoric go hand in hand in the construction of text. Perhaps an account of translation’s possibilities and impossibilities can be outlined from a systematic description of rhetorical correspondences or their lack thereof. Perhaps a snapshot of “all things lost in translation” can be taken too, frame by frame, with the high-speed camera of meticulous rhetorical analysis.

Studies of metaphorical conceptualization in translating from English into Greek have hinted at the importance of “preferred schemata” in vertical or horizontal special relations in each language (and therefore cultural rhetorical traditions), which surface from the analysis of corpora of aligned translations (or “parallel corpora”) (Sidiropoulou and Hoidas, 2014). Corpus linguistics provides powerful tools for such analyses. Perhaps on account of the exacting and time-consuming process of tagging elements (often by hand) within a body of texts of sufficient and relevant size, however, these tools in translation studies have more frequently been applied to inquiries about lexical occurrence, co-occurrence, or frequency analyses of grammatical features.

From a less statistically based approach, Karol Hardin has proposed an exhaustive comparative study of pragmatic strategies within a large corpus of television advertising in Spanish, in regional varieties from Spain, Chile, and the United States. She employed the pragmatics of Grice, John Austin, and John Searle to compare more than 500 advertisements for each lectal variety (Hardin, 2001). Her pragmatic analyses are illustrative in their own

right, but a comparison of the rhetorical structure of some of the slogans she selects may provide further insight into the topic:

- 1) *Y McDonald's donará dinero a Ronald McDonald House Charities* (62).
- 2) *Nuevos precios bajos todos los días* (62).
- 3) *Yo y mis psíquicos atenderán a tus problemas* (62).
- 4) *Cada experiencia en el nuevo Camry te llevará a la grandeza de sus cambios* (62).
- 5) *Cambia a AT&T y recibe dos entradas a un juego de MLX* (61).
- 6) *Obtenga el respeto que usted se merece* (89).
- 7) *Miller Time. Todo puede pasar* (158).
- 8) *Llame a su compañía local de cable y ordene HBO en español ahora* (37).

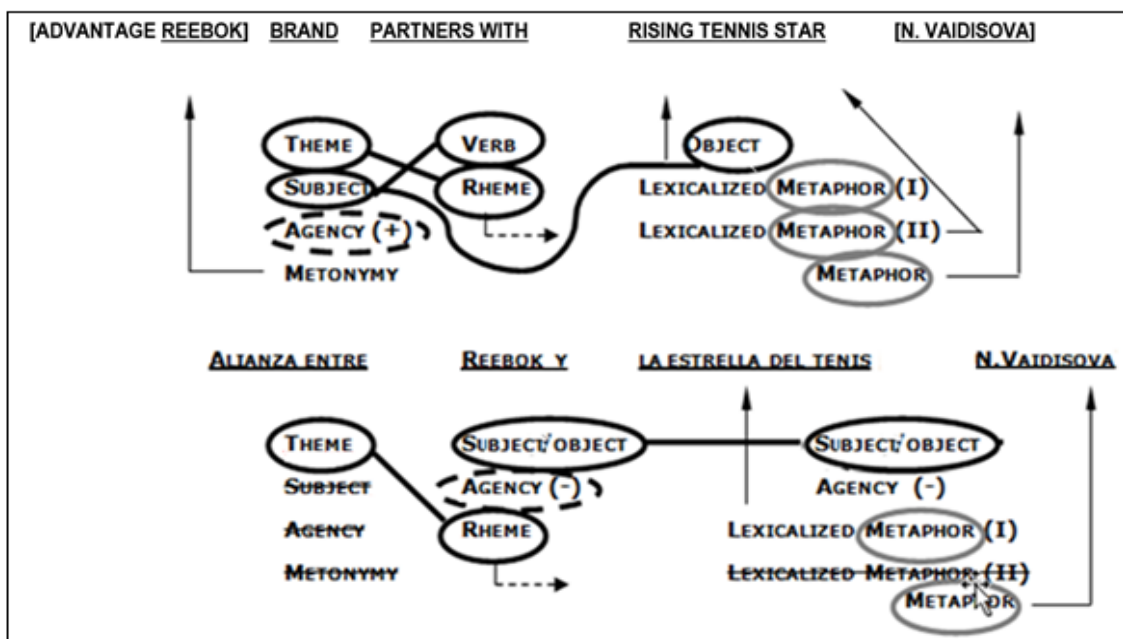
(Hardin, 2001)

Some of the preceding examples are clearly translations of identifiable English-language slogans: (2) *New Low Prices Everyday* (HEB supermarkets and Giant supermarkets); (7) *At Miller Time anything can happen* (Miller beer). Others seem to be translations because of the frequency with which they employ formulations characteristic of unskilled renditions, with grammatical structures, lexical units, and turns of phrase from English that remain apparent in the translated expression: (1) *donará dinero* ('will donate money': frequency and idiomaticity); (2) *Nuevos precios bajos* ('new low prices': excessive apposition of adjectives); (3) *Yo y mis psíquicos atenderán* ('I and my psychics will assist': subject order and subject-verb agreement); (4) *cada experiencia en* ('each experience in': prepositional pattern); (5) *juego de MLX* ('game of MLX': calque/false cognate); (6) *respeto* ('respect': denotative and connotative semantic disparity); (7) *Todo puede pasar* ('anything can happen': literalness, idiomaticity); and (8) *ordene* ('order': false cognate).

It is evident that a significant number of these differences arise from a less than skillful translation of advertising copy or slogans originally in English. However, it may be more interesting to reflect on the fact that some of these and other examples written for the Spanish-speaking consumer in the US may be a translation of a different nature: not a translation of an existing text, but a translation of "empty" (and thus "pure") rhetorical structures; not a matter of specific, case-by-case calque or loan translations, but of responding to transplanted rhetorical expectations. In short, a *true* translation of a rhetorical "repository of acquired formulas." These

would not be classified as pseudo-translations, as traditionally defined, because there is no attempt to pass them off as translations of a source text (Robinson, 2001); rather, they are translations of a “rhetorical source” that in many cases does not exist as a real text. This “rhetorical source” is nonetheless ubiquitous in advertising, as part of discursive strategies that impregnate the production of text in media that overflow into other languages. These are transplanted into the target language and are completed (“fill-in-the-blanks” like) with target-language-only words. It is not rhetorical text that is translated here, but rhetorical structures that respond in this case to a different tradition, as readymade truths in alien readymade structures.

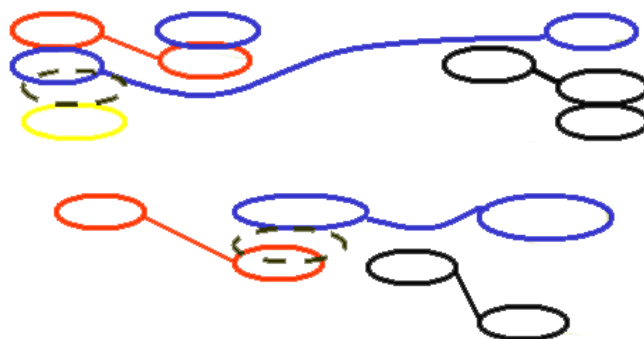
The implications of this possibility extend to the intercultural realm, which implies, in turn, that the range of rhetorical strategies in different languages needs to be systematically compared. The notion of a “rhetorical map” has been proposed in order to illustrate how translated advertising slogans undergo a profound transformation in their rhetorical structure when they are submitted to the rules of grammatical and textual acceptability (Dávila-Montes, 2008, 455):



**Figure 1. Comparison of Rhetorical Maps Between an Original Advertising Piece in English and Its Official Spanish Translation (Dávila-Montes, 2008, 455)<sup>2</sup>**

<sup>2</sup> My translation. Reebok U.S. website, [www.reebok.com/us](http://www.reebok.com/us), accessed 12/2004.

The two maps show a slightly different distribution of rhetorical “weight and densities.” A neatly engineered array of tropes and syntactical functions in the source text is forced through target language grammar to a more diluted, less robust distribution of devices in a sentence which has nearly the same length and informational value. It would be tempting simply to conclude that the source text displays a more complex rhetorical array that gets “lost in translation”: more rhetorical nodes (balloons) in the source than in the target text, higher density of rhetorical/syntactical functions in a smaller number of lexical units—“Brand” subsumes four operations, for example: subject, agent, theme, and metonymy—a higher density of tropes, a more polarized/symmetrical distribution of rhetorical “weight” (more balloons in the source towards the beginning and the end), etc. Conversely, the translated version shows a more interleaved and gradual distribution of nodes throughout the length of the sentence.



**Figure 2. Comparison of the “Naked” Rhetorical Maps Ensuing from the Analysis of Source and Target Texts**

These rhetorical maps may not be just an illustrative portrait of “what is lost in one translation” at the micro-rhetorical level—what tropes disappear, what different schemata are introduced in the target text—but hopefully may also illustrate how the meaning-making detail of translation needs to be more closely scrutinized through the lens of rhetoric, as a process of “creation of meaning,” rather than as a quest for “acceptability in deviation.” Conversely, the analysis of what tropes stay and what tropes disappear in translation may also contribute to hinting at the cognitive value of particular rhetorical structures beyond their specific persuasive value in one particular language, thus relating to differing tolerances towards rhetoric intensity, concentration, and density. The approach, however, of comparing rhetorical maps is not unproblematic. As mentioned before, comparisons risk systematically failing in several instances of “centrism,” either cultural or determined by the Linguistics (with capital “L”) tradition from which the analysis is being conducted.

A useful notion may be that of “compared deviations.” While some categories may be intrinsically non-comparable in a number of language pairs due to profound morpho-syntactical lack of fit, the ability to statistically measure deviations or markedness from “general” texts in genre-limited corpora within a single language has been proposed as a methodology to study differences between advertising texts (Dávila-Montes, 2013). The notion of “deviation” is not epistemologically unproblematic either (Cook, 2001, 142-147), but genre-restricted deviations can be measured in specific categories, whether syntactical or rhetorical, within different languages. In turn, these measurements can be compared when a degree of sufficient structural correspondence allows it (for example, in the use of enthymemes). Thus, it is not rhetorical devices that are being compared, but the tendency to deviate rhetorically that one textual genre presents in two different languages. Studies have demonstrated that advertising in Spanish, for example, may tend to resort to metonymy and enthymemes, that is, they tend to deviate from “neutral language,” three times more frequently than in English, or that, in general, advertising copy in English tends to be less inclined to rhetorical deviation than in Spanish (Dávila-Montes, 2013, 82). By superimposing findings of this nature on the above-mentioned “rhetorical maps,” conclusions may be reached on what is really lost rhetorically—not as a deficit in the transaction (how many “fewer devices” were viably transported), but as a finalistic, bottom-line deficit: that is, the net decrease in the ability to conform to the expectations and “readymade” macro-textual features within specific rhetorical tradition in the target-language culture.

### **Conclusion: Reciprocally Ignorant Yet Mutually Dependent Neighbors**

In this paper I have attempted to outline the rich complexity of possible convergences between rhetoric, comparative rhetoric, and translation studies for their own areas of intellectual inquiry. By summarizing a limited number of theories and notions, I have drawn up approaches through which these disciplines can cross-fertilize one another and thus increase the depth and scope of many of their premises: in translation studies by systematically incorporating powerful terms, notions, and methodologies from rhetoric; in rhetorical studies by including a share of inter-linguistic relativism in its questioning of discourse and import beyond the boundaries of a monolingual tradition.



On a rather shallow level, it can be said that the disciplines will indisputably benefit from a shared effort in defining themselves within academia as “not being just a matter of words.” They would also benefit from the claim of having a truly epistemic nature, as has been consistently argued for rhetoric, as well as for translation and cross-cultural studies (Ingraham, 2015; Gutiérrez, 2012). More deeply, it seems that any growth of either discipline in some specific direction may be significantly hindered by a secular lack of convergence between them. Every discussion of a generalizing nature in rhetorical studies is susceptible to deep questioning if its values are not checked against the relativizing premises of interlinguistic cognitivism. Conversely, most speculations in the linguistic and discursive comparison of languages and cultures within translation and cross-cultural studies is bound to become entangled in, and limited by, ethnocentric scientific taxonomies, inasmuch as the field is not furnished with a solid rhetorical metalanguage that allows for non-culturally biased rhetorical conceptualizations.

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