The notion of *grammatical metaphor* in Halliday[*]

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Abstract

In this paper, we claim that the use of "metaphor" in the Hallidayan use of the expression "grammatical metaphor" is metaphorical and has a metaphorical meaning. In addition, we defend that the notion of *grammatical metaphor* is metaphorically constructed from an outdated notion of *metaphor*. In this respect we argue that calling it "grammatical metaphor" creates some expectations on the part of the reader, to wit, that it is about a kind of metaphor and that there are metaphors that depend exclusively on the grammatical structure of an expression. Nevertheless, the notion of *grammatical metaphor* refers to certain non-natural grammatical variations of natural grammatical structures and thus the expectations are not fulfilled. We also defend that the name chosen for this theory is metaphorical because Halliday describes certain grammatical variations from his ideas about metaphor. Finally, we evaluate the metaphorical notion to show that it would have been more illuminating to take a more adequate description of metaphor as the starting point for the metaphorical production of the notion. This way, the conventional side of the relation between reality and grammatical form would have been transparent. Furthermore, the metaphorical origin of the Hallidayan notion of incongruity and the extra-effects that the grammatical variation entails would have been noted.

Two notions of metaphor

The main concern of this paper is to approach Halliday's notion of *grammatical metaphor*. This notion is described by Halliday (1985) in chapter 10. The title of this chapter, "Beyond the Clause: Metaphorical Modes of Expression", creates the expectation on the part of the reader that this chapter will be devoted to the characterization of metaphor. In addition, the

expression "grammatical metaphor" leads the reader to think that Halliday's approach deals with metaphor and that there are metaphors that depend exclusively on the grammatical structure of an expression. However, these two expectations are not fulfilled. The main reason for this is that the Hallidayan notion of *metaphor* serves to explain examples different in kind from those that are explained if we consider his notion of *grammatical metaphor.*

The notion of *Metaphor* according to Halliday

The idea that there are metaphors that depend exclusively upon the grammatical structure is thwarted if we consider the notion of *metaphor* stated by Halliday. Metaphor, according to Halliday, is a verbal transference; a variation in the expression of meanings which involves a non-literal use of a word. In particular, metaphor is an irregularity of content that consists on the use of a word in a sense different from its proper one and related to it in terms of similarity. Let's see examples (1) and (2).

(1) The sky is crying

(2) The old professor emeritus is a rock that is becoming brittle with age

Following the previous definitions, (1) includes an example of metaphor, i.e. "crying". This word is used for something resembling that which it usually refers to, that is, it is used to refer to the weather state of being raining although it usually refers to the physical and emotional state of being crying. Example (2) includes a metaphor too. In this case, the word "rock" is used in an improper sense, it refers to beings having the quality of being hard and the reason for this transference is the resemblance between the literal and metaphorical references of this term, that is, the resemblance between rocks and hard persons.

But, in our opinion, for a word to function metaphorically it must be used in a context that allows the interpreter to decide what type of linguistic entity s/he is facing. The use of a word is unusual or improper if it appears in a context different from the contexts in which it

normally does. So, for "rock" to be correctly interpreted as metaphorical, not only may it appear in a linguistic context as it does in a normal utterance of (2), such as (2'),

(2') [Pointing to a professor, I utter:] The old professor emeritus is a rock that is becoming brittle with age

but also in an extralinguistic context as it does in (3)

(3) [Pointing to an old professor emeritus, I utter]: The rock is becoming brittle with age

This means that the metaphorical bearer is not a word but a normal utterance of an expression such as (2') which has a contraindication among its terms or an unusual utterance of an expression such as (3).[1] These utterances include, at least, a word with a transferred meaning. This way in normal utterances of (1) and (2) "crying" and "rock" acquire a transferred meaning not because they appear with a specific grammatical category or position but because they are used in a way different from the usual one, and the concepts called for are different from those which these terms usually do. This unusual use, therefore, does not depend on the grammatical form. It does not seem plausible to think that a metaphor is a metaphor just because of its grammatical structure.

The notion of *grammatical metaphor* according to Halliday

From the Hallidayan notion of *metaphor*, we can say that we perceive a clear conflict in the expression "grammatical metaphor" because, as we have just said, a metaphor cannot be just grammatical. But, then, what does *grammatical metaphor* deal with? Up to this point, there are two possibilities: either the notion of *grammatical metaphor* is not about metaphor or it is about metaphor although the label it refers to is contradictory. The best way to handle the problem is to analyze this notion and see what examples are considered to be cases of grammatical metaphor.

Halliday's approach relies on the fact that there are different choices of grammatical structures, congruent and incongruent ones. *Grammatical metaphor* is conceived as an incongruent realization of a given semantic configuration in the lexicogrammar (1985: 321).

The concept of *grammatical metaphor* depends on the idea that there is a direct line of form to meaning to experience (1985: xix). As far as Halliday is concerned the lexicogrammar is a natural symbolic system. This means "...that both the general kinds of grammatical pattern that have evolved in language, and the specific manifestations of each kind, bear a natural relation to the meanings they have evolved to express" (Halliday 1985: xviii). There is a link between the categories of the grammar and reality. That is, grammar and reality are related in a congruent manner. This means that the direct line of form to meaning to experience is maintained intact. The different grammatical functions assigned to the participants in the clause structure express the different roles of these parts in respect to the whole and, for the selection in meaning, there will be a natural sequence of steps leading towards its realization. The underlying idea in this approach is that there is a hierarchy of semantic roles attached to the participants in the clause structure. According to this hierarchy, we choose to function as the subject, first the agent, then, if we do not know the agent or do not want to mention it, we choose the affected, then, the effected, then, the goal, and so on. This is so because there is a natural relation between the participants and the semantic roles attached to them. For example, if we want to talk about what the duke gave my aunt, the natural way to do it would be (4)

(4) The duke gave my aunt that teapot

and one way to analyse it would be (4').

(4')	The duke	gave	my aunt	that teapot
Function:	Agent	process material	recipient	goal
Class:	noun	verb	noun	noun

But there also exists grammatical metaphor "whereby meanings may be cross-coded, phenomena represented by categories other than those that evolved to represent them" (Halliday 1985: xviii). In other words, for any semantic configuration there is one congruent expression and a set of metaphoric variants or incongruent expressions. This variation or incongruent expression is understood as a "selection of words that is different from that which is in some sense typical or unmarked" (Halliday 1985: 20). Then, according to Halliday (1985: 43), we could also talk about what the duke gave my aunt in an incongruent manner as in (5)

(5) What the duke gave my aunt was that teapot

which can be analysed in the way presented in (5')

(5')	What the duke gave my aunt	was	that teapot
Functions:	identified	relational	identifier
Class:	Value	intensive	token

This is a metaphorical or incongruent expression of (4), an example of grammatical metaphor.

The grammatical variation can be obtained either changing only the structure as in the variation from (4) to (5) or changing both the structure and the grammatical classes of the lexical items involved as in the change from (6) to (7).

(6) The cast acted brilliantly so the audience applauded for a long time

(7) The cast's brilliant acting drew lengthy applause from the audience

If we consider the Hallidayan analysis of (6) and (7), represented in (6') and (7') respectively,

(6')	The cast	acted	brilliantly	so the audience applauded for a long time
Functions:	noun	verb	adverb	(hypotactic clause)

Class: Agent   process   circumstance

(7')   The cast's brilliant acting   drew   lengthy applause   from   the   audience
Functions: noun   verb   noun   prepositional phrase

we can see how the verb "act" has become a noun "acting". But there are much more changes
and they involve a complex rearrangement of the semantic configuration of the clause which is
explained by Halliday (1993:80):

> The processes **acted** and **applauded** have been turned into nouns, **acting** and
> **applause**; the participant **the cast** has become a possessive, while **the audience**
> has become part of a prepositional phrase. The circumstances **brilliantly** and
> **for a long time** have both become adjectives inside nominal groups; and the
> relation between the two processes, showing that one of them caused the other,
> has become a verb, **drew**. This makes it sound as though acting and clapping
> were things, and as if the only event that took place was the cause relation
> between them (…**acting drew**…**applause**). All these changes illustrate what is
> meant by grammatical metaphor.

Following Halliday's distinction of clause meaning in two main categories, ideational
and interpersonal, he distinguishes two types of grammatical metaphors: (a) ideational
metaphors, which are considered metaphors of transitivity such as examples (5) and (7), and (b)
interpersonal metaphors, which are considered metaphors of mood and modality. An example of
type (b) is (8)

(8) I don't believe that pudding ever will be cooked

where "I don't believe" is functioning as an expression of modality equivalent to "probably" in the congruent expression that appears in (9)

(9) Probably that pudding never will be cooked

as can be shown by the tag for both (8) and (9), which would be "will it?".

Examples such as (5), (7) and (8) are not similar to (1) and (2). Normal utterances of (1) and (2) include a word used with a transferred meaning produced by resemblance, while normal utterances of (5), (7) and (8) do not include that transference; the normal utterances of (5), (7) and (8) are grammatical variations of the normal utterances of (4), (6), and (9) respectively. This way, we can see that *grammatical metaphor* does not deal with transfer of meaning, but with grammar even if it affects the order and emphasis of the semantic roles that take a part in the sintagmatic relations of the grammatical structures of clauses or phrases. The change involved in metaphor is paradigmatic and affects the content of the lexical item without changing the grammatical class or the structure in which it is embedded. This way, we see that metaphor and grammatical metaphor are very different phenomena and the expectation that grammatical metaphor is a type of metaphor is defeated.

The identification of the metaphorical use of "metaphor" in "grammatical metaphor"

It is now that we may start thinking about "metaphor" having been used metaphorically in the expression "grammatical metaphor". In fact, Halliday (1985: 345) suggests this in the last page of the book: "The concept of grammatical metaphor, itself **perhaps** a metaphorical extension of the term from its rhetorical sense as a figure of speech, enables us to bring together a number of features of discourse which at first sight look rather different from each other".

For the expression "grammatical metaphor" to be interpreted metaphorically, we have to identify it as metaphorical. Yet, from Halliday's definition of *metaphor* it is impossible to say that the expression may be identified as metaphorical because Halliday's approach lacks a

criterion for the identification of metaphor and this is one of the reasons why he thinks that the use of "metaphor" in this expression is "**perhaps**" metaphorical.[2]

From our point of view, an expression is detected as metaphorical when a contextual abnormality is perceived. The possible occurrence of lexical items in their different contexts of use (linguistic or extralinguistic) are comprised in the conceptual system that shapes our linguistic competence. By linguistic competence we understand the phonetic, lexicogrammatical and semantic conventions shared by the members of a linguistic community in a certain moment of the language. The linguistic competence of an individual also includes both the individual's encyclopaedic knowledge and the context of culture which, in our opinion, are part of her/his own conceptual system. In addition, it involves the mechanisms of interpretation of the possible utterances and the combinatorial potential of the lexical units comprised in the vocabulary of a language. This means that depending on our linguistic competence, there is some habitual or expected co-occurrence of words or concepts characteristic of lexical behaviour in language, testifying to its predictability of use. So, if the context (linguistic or extralinguistic) does not fit the prediction of use of our concepts fixed in our linguistic competence we will be facing an unusual context which will lead us to think that the utterance may be metaphorical. But let's go back to examples (2') and (3). In (2'), "rock" is used in the sense of a hard mass of consolidated mineral matter. However, it does not seem likely that our linguistic competence may find it appropriate that such a term be predicated of a professor. This way we detect a contextual abnormality, either by the linguistic context in (2') or by the situational context in (3).

The contextual abnormality is not a sufficient condition for the metaphoric identification of an utterance. Thus, when the contextual abnormality appears with a conceptual contrast,[3] with the recognition that the speaker is talking about a topic (represented by the target domain) using terms which normally describe another (represented by the source domain), we can say we are facing a metaphorical utterance. The contextual abnormalities found in (2') and (3) are accompanied with the contrast between the two concepts involved in the metaphors; in both of them there is a conceptual contrast because we identify that we are talking about a certain professor using a term that represents our conventional concept of rock. The abnormality

in (2') and (3) lead us to recognize that two concepts are involved and that one of them acts as the target concept, the concept we are talking about or the concept PROFESSOR, and the other one as the source concept, the concept attributed to the one we are talking about or the concept ROCK. We realize that certain features typical of rocks are used to describe metaphorically an old professor.

Similarly, "metaphor" in the expression "grammatical metaphor" is used in the sense of "a word used for something resembling that which it usually refers to" (Halliday 1985:319). But it does not seem likely that our linguistic competence may find it appropriate that "metaphor" may be attached to examples such as normal utterances of (5), (7), and (8). Indeed, these utterances of (5), (7) and (8) are not similar to (2')-(3); they are examples of less usual grammatical patterns and not examples that include words used in an improper sense. This way we detect a contextual abnormality, the contextual abnormality of using "metaphor" for examples that are not metaphors. This abnormality appears with a conceptual contrast, the conceptual contrast that results from recognizing that we are talking about examples of grammatical variations through Halliday's notion of *metaphor*. *Grammatical metaphor* refers to a marked grammatical realisation; refers to cases such as the normal utterances of (5), (7) and (8) if considered as grammatical variations of normal utterances of (4), (6) and (9) respectively. When we discover that *grammatical metaphor* does not refer to metaphor in the sense we had in mind but to something else, we identify the idea of *metaphor* as the source domain and grammatical variation as the target domain.

The metaphorical meaning of "metaphor" in "grammatical metaphor"

Once we know that "metaphor" is used metaphorically in the expression "grammatical metaphor" the question is what is its metaphorical meaning? If we follow the definition proposed by Halliday the answer must be that the metaphorical meaning of "metaphor" is different from its proper one and related to it by similarity. However, this explanation does not tell us about how we can get the metaphorical meaning of "metaphor". According to Halliday, "rock" in (2') would refer metaphorically to beings having the quality of being hard in terms of

the similarity between these beings and rocks. But, in our opinion, resemblance is notoriously not a well defined term. Anything may resemble anything in at least some respect. Therefore, to resort to similarity without further ado is of very little help (Black 1955). When and how a resemblance is perceived is not explained in Halliday's approach, it lacks a description of what the mechanisms involved in the interpretation of metaphor are. If we want to know what the transferred meaning of "metaphor" in "grammatical metaphor" is, we should know what the resemblance that yields that meaning is.[4]

A metaphor links two separate cognitive domains, by using the language appropriate to one of them as a lens through which to observe the other (Indurkhya 1986). These domains represent the concepts that we detect in the conceptual contrast. Metaphors redescribe a domain called "target domain" in terms of another domain called "source domain". The former represents the concept we are talking about, the latter represents the concept attributed to the one we are talking about. Through this metaphorical restructuring of the target domain in terms of the source domain, some terms acquire a metaphorical meaning.[5]

When the speaker calls the old professor emeritus a "rock" in (2'), it does not mean he is really a hard mass of consolidated mineral matter, it means that "rock" acquires here a transferred meaning as a result of the mapping from the domain representing the concept ROCK to the domain representing the concept PROFESSOR (Romero and Soria forthcoming(b)). This way, in the metaphorical use of the expression "grammatical metaphor", the target domain represents the concept GRAMMATICAL VARIATION and the source domain represents the concept METAPHOR. In this expression, "metaphor" acquires a metaphorical or transferred meaning as a result of the mapping from terms in the domain of "metaphor" to terms in the domain of "grammatical variation". But, what is then the metaphorical meaning of "metaphor" in this context? We will answer this question by analyzing the metaphorical origin of the notion of *grammatical metaphor*, that is, redescribing the features that can be transferred from source to target domain. The problem is to find out the ideas that can be transferred from METAPHOR to the study of the examples of grammatical metaphor?

The first and most obvious idea that we can transfer from METAPHOR to the so-called GRAMMATICAL METAPHOR is the variation in meaning. Indeed, the variation in grammatical form is the metaphorical extension of variations in meaning. On the other hand, the variation is produced, in the context of traditional rhetoric, from a natural meaning to an unnatural or improper meaning. Similarly, in grammatical metaphor, the variation is achieved from the natural relation between grammar and reality to an incongruent or unnatural form of expression. Something else that can be transferred from source to target domain is the mode of production of this variation. From the lexical point of view, metaphor is a word used for something resembling that which it usually refers to; then, the sort of variation in grammatical metaphor is based on resemblance of meaning between a natural grammatical form and an incongruent grammatical form.

As far as Halliday is concerned, (5), (7) and (8) are metaphorical or incongruent expressions of (4), (6) and (9) respectively which are congruent. They are not synonymous but they are potentially co-representational and in that respect form a set of metaphoric variants.

Advantages of the metaphorical construction of the notion of *grammatical metaphor*

What we find interesting in this approach is the fact that the selection of a certain pattern is a meaningful choice. The system of language offers different structures to the expression of meanings and the selection of one is in itself meaningful. We also find interesting the fact that, for any given semantic configuration, there is a typical or unmarked realisation in the lexicogrammar and if we choose a less typical form it is because we want to convey some extra meaning. "The selection of metaphor is itself a meaningful choice, and the particular metaphor selected adds further semantic features." (Halliday 1985: 321).

In the transference of functions involved in grammatical metaphors, some part is made prominent for specific effects, thematic emphasis[6] for example. Another intended effect may be to muffle part of the situation linguistically represented, or to present it in a less personal way. In grammatical metaphors, the semantic roles do not coincide with the participants to which they would have been attached in the congruent expression. Let's consider the following

examples taken from Downing (1991: 118). In (10a), a grammatical metaphorical variant of (10b), the volition of the agent is muffled

(10a) **There has been an increasing disposition** to treat a life based on the elementary desires and gratifications as unsatisfactory.

(10b) (Man) **has become more and more disposed** to treat a life based on the elementary desires and gratifications as unsatisfactory.

The transference of functions involved in grammatical metaphor entails a textual reorganization as well. We may talk of grammatical metaphor as a discoursal rather than simply a sentential process. What the speaker or writer puts first will influence the interpretation of everything that follows. Grammatical metaphor constitutes a powerful resource in the construction of a message and its influence can be perceived in its textual organization. As Downing (1989: 88) says, grammatical metaphor is "one of the more sophisticated operations involved in a writer's exploitation of the meaning potential of a language."[7]

The terminological problem

We wish to point out that, although the metaphorical construction of the notion *grammatical metaphor* is clearly useful for the reasons mentioned in the previous section, assigning a metaphorical name to this approach is not communicatively relevant. The optimal relevance of an utterance depends, following Sperber and Wilson's terminology (1986/1995), on the relation between the processing effort required to process it optimally and the contextual effects this optimal processing achieves. "On the effect side, the presumption is that the level of effects achievable is never less than is needed to make the stimulus worth processing; on the effort side, it is that the level of effort required is never more than is needed to achieve these effects". (Sperber and Wilson 1986: 157)

Following this idea, a metaphor is communicatively successful if it verifies its optimal relevance, that is, if the speaker gets enough contextual effects to be worth the processing effort.

And, in our opinion, it is not relevant to use the metaphorical expression "grammatical metaphor" because the processing effort required to interpret this expression metaphorically is not justified by the contextual effects that result from that interpretation. In other words, in the metaphorical interpretation of "grammatical metaphor" the processing effort is bigger than the contextual effects we may achieve. The metaphorical interpretation is too difficult because we have problems in identifying this expression as metaphorical. Moreover, we also have problems to construct the content it intends to convey as it is a meta-metaphor, that is, grammatical metaphor is described metaphorically through the notion of *metaphor*. Nevertheless, its interpretation stems from a notion of *metaphor* that does not correspond to the device that allows us to interpret it, rather it stems from an outdated notion of *metaphor*.

Although we have shown here that the expression is identified as metaphorical we would like to point out that it is not easy to reach this conclusion. To identify an expression as metaphorical requires an additional effort (we have to perceive a contextual abnormality and a conceptual contrast), but to identify the expression "grammatical metaphor" as metaphorical is especially difficult. This is so not only because we have to perceive the contextual abnormality but also because the contextual abnormality involved in this particular case is not obvious. Only when we see that the phenomenon under description is not metaphor do we realise that there is a contextual abnormality. The concept of *grammatical metaphor* does not really refer to metaphor but to grammatical variation; even so, this is not explicitly stated, it is only suggested, as we said, in the last page of his book (Halliday 1985: 345). Therefore, the reader cannot become aware of this fact until quite late in the chapter because Halliday introduces it with a description of what he considers to be *metaphor* and then tries to relate this notion to the notion of *grammatical metaphor*. In addition, the different uses of these notions are mixed up throughout the chapter. Halliday does not offer a neat distinction between them and he never specifies which of these two concepts he is using.

Furthermore, arguments as the following, also lead us to doubt whether we are facing a metaphorical expression or not. Metaphor and grammatical metaphor are related by saying that metaphorical variation is lexicogrammatical rather than simply lexical; and, although many

metaphors can be located in lexical expressions there is often a grammatical variation accompanying them. Indeed Halliday (1985: 320) says: "There is a strong grammatical element in rhetorical transference; and once we have recognized this we find that there is also such a thing as grammatical metaphor, where the variation is essentially in the grammatical forms although often entailing some lexical variation as well". Thus, if metaphor is lexicogrammatical why should we account for metaphor just grammatically? As far as Halliday is concerned, there is no sharp line between semantics and grammar. Functional grammar is pushed in the direction of semantics. But, given this difficulty, why does he account for metaphor at these two different levels? Wouldn't it be more consistent with his approach to say that the choice in meaning (metaphorical) may entail an atypical structural realization?[8]

The phenomenon of metaphor does not operate at different levels (grammatical, lexical, etc.) generating different types of metaphors. Metaphor is a linguistic phenomenon and as such it is realized through the different levels of language (grammatical, semantic, pragmatic, etc.) just as literal language is.

In a sense, Halliday realizes that *grammatical metaphors* can appear both in metaphorical and in literal language and this can be appreciated by the fact that he argues that congruent does not correspond to literal. Halliday avoids the use of the term "literal" because it is very closely associated to lexis, but to be consistent with that argument he should also avoid the term "metaphor" because it is equally associated to lexis. Metaphor is a conceptual phenomenon and therefore it is impossible to dissociate it from lexis. In addition, it is described in opposition to literal language and it is precisely to distinguish it form literal language that it makes sense to talk about metaphor. In fact, if we find a grammatical metaphor which does not entail a lexical variation it means that we can find grammatical metaphor in literal language as in (5), (7), and (8). The notion described by Halliday, which is grammatical in its character, is operative both in the literal and the metaphorical language. Furthermore, when he maintains the idea of a metaphor often entailing a grammatical metaphor, Halliday (1985: 319) gives the example (11)

(11) He oozes geniality

and adds that there is no way to represent it in a literal form simply by replacing the word oozes with another lexical item. But this has nothing to do with its grammatical form but with the possibility of paraphrasing metaphor.[9] We do not see in what respect this example entails a grammatical metaphor because it is realized through a very normal grammatical pattern in English as we can see in (11')

(11')   He   oozes   geniality

         senser/ S   process/ P   phenomenon/ Od

In addition, the correspondent grammatical metaphor of (11) may be, for instance (12)

(12) Geniality oozes all over him

"Geniality" is given here a textual prominence by placing it earlier than expected in the clause. It entails a marked grammatical realization but the different grammatical realization does not affect the metaphorical character of the utterance.

As a consequence of what has just been said, we can add that it is not easy to perceive the conceptual contrast that allows us to grasp we are facing a metaphorical expression, that is, it is not easy to know what "grammatical metaphor" refers to.

On the other hand, in metaphor, we need to contrast two concepts and, in this case, one of the concepts (METAPHOR) remains unclear in the competence of the reader because it is not the actual notion of *metaphor* in the field of linguistics and the other concept (GRAMMATICAL VARIATION) is not known as it will be constructed metaphorically.

We are invited to take a traditional definition of metaphor as the starting point which is not the usual notion of *metaphor* in the context of linguistics and pragmatics nowadays. But, communication also depends on the mutual cognitive environment, that is, for a metaphor to

serve as communicative tool the concepts involved in the metaphor must be manifest to addresser and addressee, otherwise the listener would interpret the metaphor differently from what the speaker meant and therefore communication would fail. The expression "grammatical metaphor" is a meta-metaphor and this fact makes its interpretation very difficult. The problem is that characterizing *grammatical metaphor* metaphorically through the notion of *metaphor* creates puns which are difficult to interpret. The reader must invest some extra effort to bear in mind the different senses yielded by the different uses of the term "metaphor".

These facts cause the balance between processing effort and contextual effects to be negative, that is to say, the effort needed to obtain the effect intended by Halliday is not worth the effort required to interpret the expression. This metaphorical expression is not communicatively productive. For that reason, we think it would have been better to give this theory a name that could be assigned literally to the phenomenon it describes. This can be solved with the change of the expression "grammatical metaphor" by "grammatical variation" o even "marked morphosyntactic variation".

The notional problem

The terminological problem is not the only one. There are, in addition, some problems related to the notion of *grammatical metaphor*. The main problem in Halliday's conception of *grammatical metaphor* is that it is considered as an unnatural and marked form of expression in which the line of form to meaning to experience is indirect and that it is opposed to a congruent form of expression which is natural.

Halliday explains that there is no sharp line between the congruent and the incongruent forms as we tend to operate somewhere in between these two extremes and that "There are many instances where a metaphorical expression has become the norm" (Halliday 1985: 321). But if the incongruent becomes the norm in, let's say, half of the cases, language is not that natural; at least from a synchronic point of view.

It is not correct to think that there is always a natural line of form to meaning to experience because, in our opinion, the grammatical structures available in a language are

conventional. The type of process involved in the so-called "grammatical metaphors" is better described as a marked grammatical realization. Nevertheless, "marked" does not mean to us an artificial way of expressing something that might have been expressed naturally; it is just another option offered by the language for the expression of meanings which is less frequently used. This option may be marked because of different reasons (marked thematic presentation, for instance) but it is a convention in the language for one or the other to be more or less typical. In other words, a structure is marked or unmarked because of its more or less usual occurrence determined by the conventions of the language to express the sort of meaning being conveyed but not because there are expressions which are more or less natural. In fact, there are structures that are conventionally available in the English language which are not in other languages[10] and this does not mean that some languages are more natural than others. For example, in English we can say

(13) This room seats sixty people

where the locative "this room" functions as the subject of a clause in which the process is of the type "material". This is one of the structures that are available, by convention, in the English language, it is one of the options potentially attached to a representation of a state of affairs as the one exemplified in (13). However, in Spanish we cannot say (14)

(14) *Esta habitación sienta a sesenta personas

because its grammatical pattern is not an option offered by the system of the Spanish language, to convey that meaning in Spanish we should use a different grammatical pattern such as the one that appears in (15)

(15) Esta habitación tiene capacidad para sesenta personas.

Every language accommodates in its grammar distinct ways of expression. (15), unlike (14), does not entail a material process but a relational one. But if a language did not depend on a conventional but on a natural relation between reality and grammar, there would not be different ways for representing the same reality. From a natural perspective, the differences could only be explained if we agreed with the quite implausible idea that there are languages that are more natural than others. However, from a conventional perspective, the differences are explained because what is more typical in one language may be less in another as the frequency of occurrence of a structure does not depend on nature but on convention.

From this perspective we can also explain how it is possible for a grammatical metaphor to become the typical form. If the typical form is typical just for a conventional reason, there is no problem in it becoming the norm when it is used more frequently.

But, if the congruent is defined as a natural and unmarked expression, and we eliminate the idea of "natural", the notion of *incongruity* is neutralized coming to mean the same as marked. This way, grammatical variation is conceived as a marked grammatical realization. Furthermore, if we eliminate the idea of incongruity equating it to "markedness", we eliminate the idea of metaphor associated to this phenomenon because it was this feature that characterized it as metaphorical.

The problems mentioned may be avoided if we re-structure metaphorically the notion of *grammatical metaphor* through a notion of *metaphor* that gets round the obstacles of Halliday's notion of *metaphor*.[11] Metaphor is, from our point of view, an utterance identified as such when a contextual abnormality is perceived and this fact leads to a conceptual contrast by which the listener identifies one concept as source domain and another as target. From that contrast we can, through the metaphorical mechanism, yield a metaphorical non-conventional meaning. The interpretation of this non-conventional meaning brings about what we call "extra-contextual effects". Taking this description of metaphor as the starting point, we could apply two ideas to the concept of *grammatical variation*: (i) an expression used in an unusual way, that is, a marked realization and (ii) an utterance by which some extra-effects are achieved.

The features of metaphor that can be metaphorically applied to the phenomenon described by Halliday might be contextual abnormality (incongruity[12]) and extra-contextual effects. As regards to the first, we can say that both phenomena are considered to be an incongruent realization. Nevertheless, they are incongruent in a different sense. Grammatical metaphor refers to an incongruent option offered by the language, that is, a convention which is marked. By contrast, contextual abnormality refers to the fact that in any metaphorical utterance at least a lexical item is used in a non-conventional way so that it calls for a concept different from any one predicted for it in our conceptual system. In metaphor, an expression is incongruous as regards to the conventions. The variation is produced from conventional to non-conventional and the result is a non-conventional meaning. On the contrary, in grammatical metaphor incongruity arises as regards to the marked/unmarked contrast. The variation is produced from conventional and unmarked to conventional and marked. The result is a marked conventional structure. For this reason, not even this feature is really applicable to "grammatical metaphor" unless we used it referring to structures that are not predicted in the system of language, but this very rarely happens, just in literary contexts and in these cases it is said to be a "poetic licence".

There is still another feature of metaphor that can be applied to grammatical metaphor, i.e. extra-contextual effects. In relation to grammatical metaphor, we can say that there is an unmarked realisation in the lexicogrammar for any given semantic configuration and if we choose another form, it is because we want to convey some extra meaning. This extra meaning constitutes what we might call the rewards of *grammatical metaphor*. In metaphor, the non-conventional meaning constitutes the extra-contextual effects[13] peculiar to the metaphorical interpretation. In both phenomena there is an extra meaning involved, though a meaning different in its character: thematic in grammatical variation, and cognitive in metaphor. Here, as in metaphor, the extra effort needed to interpret a marked form is justified by the "further semantic features" obtained. But these further semantic features are non-conventional and cognitive in the case of *metaphor* and conventional and thematic in the case of *grammatical metaphor.*

Conclusion

Halliday's notion of *metaphor* is understood as a word used for something resembling that which it usually refers to. *Grammatical metaphor* is understood as a marked morphosyntatic realization of a given semantic configuration. In this respect, we have argued that to name it "grammatical metaphor" involves producing a contextual abnormality; it entails assigning the name "metaphor" to examples which are but marked morphosyntactic variations. In addition, this leads us to appreciate a conceptual contrast, namely, to regard grammatical variation as target domain, and Halliday's ideas on metaphor as source domain. That expression becomes understandable when we realize, not without difficulties, that "metaphor" is used here as a metaphorical extension of the term. These difficulties, which are concerned with the identification and interpretation of that expression, lead us to think that, whether we agree with Halliday's grammatical theory or not, assigning the name of "grammatical metaphor" to the phenomenon under description is not very convenient. The expression "grammatical metaphor" does not seem to be a good name for the grammatical phenomenon that Halliday introduces. Indeed, we prefer to call it "marked morphosyntactic variation".

Notes

[1] For more information about metaphorical bearers, see Romero (1991, 1999).
[2] We have printed "perhaps" in bold letters to underline the fact that Halliday does not commit himself to the idea that the use of the term "metaphor" is metaphorical as much as we will do.
[3] The conditions for the identification of metaphor constitute the criterion of demarcation between metaphorical and non-metaphorical language proposed in Soria (1992), and Romero and Soria (1997/1998, forthcoming(a)).
[4] There have been many attempts in the specialized literature to solve this problem. A detailed state of the art on this topic can be found in Romero (1990-91, 1999).
[5] In the metaphorical use of language, unlike what happens in the literal one, our linguistic competence is momentarily modified in every utterance. Metaphors enable us to see one thing in terms of another and this is what guides the modification of our linguistic competence.
[6] Thematic meaning refers to distribution of elements according to degrees of prominence.
[7] The meaning involved in grammatical variations is of a thematic character and must be distinguished from the cognitive meaning that we say it is transferred in lexical metaphor. Thematic meaning depends on the distribution of elements in the clause structure according to the semantic

roles attached to them.

[8] We say structural because grammar includes semantic features. If grammar is pushed in the direction of semantics, that is to say, includes syntactic as well as semantic features it is a contradiction to talk about grammar as opposed to lexis.

[9] The problem of paraphrase in relation to metaphor has been largely discussed in the specialised literature. For example, Black (1955).

[10] Quirk (1985) and other grammars of the English language offer a description of the different grammatical patterns available to express a meaning and the further semantic features that are conventionally associated with them.

[11] Halliday's definition of metaphor presents two problems. First of all, it does not serve to distinguish the literal from the metaphorical language, that is, it does not offer a criterion for the identification of metaphor. Second, it does not provide a characterization of the similarity involved in metaphor.

[12] "Contextual abnormality" is a better description of the concept of *incongruity* that is often associated to metaphor in the specialized literature. But taking into account that this is the fundamental feature that Halliday attributes to grammatical metaphor, we will refer to contextual abnormality as a sort of incongruity involved in lexical metaphor when comparing it to the incongruity defined by the author.

[13] Through the notion of extra contextual effects we can state clearly what are the "rewards" that Nair, Carter and Toolan (1988) attribute to the interpretation of metaphor. These authors argue that a metaphor is a kind of risk-taking in the interests of richer interpersonal communication, and hence a risk with rewards.

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Word Count: 7146