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*‘Ups’ and ‘downs’ in metaphor use: the  
case of increase / decrease metaphors  
in Spanish economic discourse*

**Anca Pecican**



# 'Ups' and 'downs' in metaphor use: the case of increase / decrease metaphors in Spanish economic discourse

*Anca Pecican*

**Abstract:** The purpose of the present article is to analyze the use of evaluative metaphors in two economic discourse genres displaying different degrees of specialization: business media and the central bank report. The article points out the differences in terms of metaphor use between the two types of discourses ranging from lexical choices to the way evaluation is assumed. Metaphor use is also a result of specific textual goals. The research is intended to provide a detailed insight into matters related to hidden subjective content present in metaphors. The extended use of the lexical items in focus both in the media as well as in specialized discourse tends to generate readers' over familiarization with them and consequently the possibility of value neutralization. That is why people are usually not aware of the opinion forming effects metaphors have in communication.

**Keywords:** metaphor, evaluation, linguistic context, discourse genre, ideology

## Introduction

Perhaps the most frequent news reports on nowadays business issues refer to the growth or fall of economic indicators such as inflation, prices, sales, share values, etc. On the other hand, academic research writings, central bank reports or other types of specialized communication in the field of economics approach such issues either as central topic or as supporting arguments, for example. Indeed, the increase / decrease lexicon is a constant presence in both business language and economics discourse. If we chose to give better attention to the nature of this lexicon, we would immediately notice the metaphorical origins of the great part of such verbs, nouns or adjectives. The present research focuses on evaluative increase / decrease metaphors in the case of Spanish economic language. As opposed to 'simple' metaphors such as *subir* ('go up'), *bajar* ('go down'), *avanzar* ('advance'), *retroceder* ('go back'), etc., which refer only to the type of variation, evaluative metaphors actualize additional information concerning the extent of the process. Part of such lexical items qualify the increase as higher (*dispararse* 'to shoot / rocket'; *inflarse* 'to inflate') or lower (*remontar* 'remount') than expected, while others signal the fall of the economic indicator as inferior or superior (*desplomarse* 'to collapse') to a 'normal' level. Furthermore, in addition to these two constant semantic components, the type of variation and the amount of fall or rise, certain items also refer to the speed of the change (*dispararse*, *caer*, *recuperarse*, *remontar*); to previous situations on the market (*remontar*, *recuperarse*, *desinflarse*); to causes (*lastrar*) and objectives (*adelgazar*); to values on the 'good' – 'bad' scale assigned to the respective trend (*recuperarse*, *remontar*); to the foundations of the increase (*inflarse*); to temporal phases of the process (*estar por las nubes*, *estar por el suelo*). Actually, it is a common feature of metaphors to own complex semantic configurations on account of their twofold nature. Concretely, in all these cases the source domain concepts are used to express the mentioned economic phenomena, emphasizing certain specific characteristics.

All throughout the present analysis we choose to refer to metaphor not as a simply stylistic device but as a cognitive resource which people currently use to understand nonlinguistic reality. Conceptual metaphor theory as it was developed in cognitive linguistics can be considered the most prolific in nowadays research on metaphor. According to the cognitive approach, metaphor is a means of understanding one conceptual domain, usually of abstract nature, by means of another conceptual domain

with roots in our everyday concrete experience. The former is generally named *target domain* while the latter, *source domain*. Accordingly, metaphor is defined as a 'source to target mapping' (Lakoff 1987, p. 276). Examples of conceptual metaphors are to be met everywhere as they are constantly pervading our way of thinking and conceiving reality. The analysis Lakoff and Johnson (1980) applied to English revealed metaphorical mappings such as ARGUMENT IS WAR (*He attacked my theory*), LIFE IS A JORNEY (*This relation is going nowhere*), TIME IS MONEY (*He spent a lot of time there*), etc. In the case of the lexical paradigm that concerns our research, the target domain is economics while the source domains are related to oriented movement, living organisms, force interaction, etc. The examples mentioned above highlight the unbreakable bond between conceptual mapping and linguistic expression, also named the surface realization of metaphor. In other words, language is the material part of metaphor and at the same time, the path to analyzing people's way of thinking about the surrounding reality.

Among the theoretical issues related to metaphor largely analyzed by researchers within the cognitive linguistics framework we have selected the one concerning the functions metaphors fulfil at the level of discourse. According to Lakoff and Johnson (1980, pp. 25-29), the experience we have with our own bodies serves as basis for realizing several cognitive operations with abstract realities. In this way metaphor helps us to refer to or to quantify abstract things, identify certain aspects or conceive them as causes or purposes. For instance, ontological metaphors are those which reveal the conceptualization of one abstract, undefined matter as an entity or substance. To say that the Spanish stock exchange index is escalating (*el IBEX está escalando posiciones*) or that it is recovering (*el IBEX se recupera*) is to refer to the respective abstract measure as to an entity able to move or experience certain physiological state. Thus, metaphor makes it easier and effective to grasp and operate with abstract economic concepts.

The present article aims to analyze the evaluative function of increase / decrease metaphors in economic language, of which quantifying is just a part, though very important in the case of the respective target conceptual domain. The introductory sections provide a brief presentation of the analytical framework regarding metaphor, namely cognitive linguistics, as well as the approach to metaphor in economics. The third section explores the use of orientational evaluative metaphors in Spanish

business media and in the central bank report. Special attention is given to quantitative evaluation and to the relation metaphor – textual goals. The next section analyzes the use of organic metaphors in the two corpora focusing on the axiological evaluation. The concluding section approaches the research findings from the perspective of the role played by metaphor in transmitting ideological or subjective content.

## Metaphor and economics

Economists' interest in language and metaphor took shape in the decade of the 1980's through the writings of D. McCloskey and has continued ever since. According to the American researcher, who has dedicated great part of her career to arguing in favour of the benefits of studying language in relation to economics, 'good scientists use language. The best scientists, the Goulds and Feynmans and the like use it with self-awareness' (McCloskey 1985, 1998, p. 40). McCloskey is convinced that conflicts between economic academic groupings could be easily solved if scientists gave more attention to the use of language, to metaphor, storytelling, etc. employed in expressing ideas. Therefore, self-consciousness about metaphor use would be an improvement for economics.

Linguistic facts are a direct consequence of cognitive processes as 'each step in economic reasoning is metaphorical' (McCloskey 1988, p. 16). Therefore, many economists turned to analyzing metaphors used in economic discourse with the aim of achieving more insight into economic thought. Perhaps the easiest way to spot metaphors is by looking at modelling. McCloskey (1988, p. 17) mentions 'elasticity', 'equilibrium', 'depression' or 'competition' as old metaphors which have become dead for nowadays economists. Starr-Glass (2014, p. 230) speaks of the 'wilderness of dead metaphors' referring to the hidden meanings overlooked on account of over use. The researcher analyzes the metaphors ECONOMY IS A CARED FOR HOUSEHOLD present in the lexical item of Greek origins, *economy*, and the MARKET as a marketplace. Both of them are present in Macroeconomics course book and widely used in economic discourse. However, for most students and economists the original meanings are opaque, and therefore metaphors have lost their potency, ceasing to provide new perspectives to economic thought. The author explains the fading in meaning as follows: 'the elements of the source-domain are no longer mapped with the

original target-domain to provide any anchor for additional meaning and exploration' (Starr-Glass 2014, p. 234).

Ali (2014) examines two metaphors related to money used in economics literature highlighting the difference between the structures of thought used to describe and model economy that each of them implies. The author concludes that the MONEY IS A COMMODITY metaphor is easier to comprehend and analyze, serving as 'a useful function in simplifying our understanding of money' (Ali 2014, p. 303). On the other hand, the MONEY IS CREDIT metaphor has greater explanatory power, enhancing a better understanding of the modern banking system.

Neither Ali nor Starr-Glass touches the subject of ideology present in metaphor, although in the former's case especially, connections with the capitalist economic frame are briefly mentioned. As regards biasing content metaphor carries in discourse, McCloskey (1988, pp. 23-24) points out that 'metaphors evoke attitudes that are better kept in the open and under the control of reasoning'. With this respect, she related metaphor to political ideology or, in other cases, to the authority of Science, which invite us to accept their existence without inquiring on their validity. For instance, the metaphor of the invisible hand pictures the contradictions of capitalism as 'portentous and scientifically precise', making us accept them as such. McCloskey also mentions the metaphor of 'marginal productivity' which implies the existence of distribution problems, an issue far from capitalist assumption that distribution is the result of capitalism and competition.

## Metaphor and evaluation

Increase / decrease metaphors can be studied from a variety of perspectives: the one related to the source-to-target mapping; the highlighting and hiding effects metaphor has in expressing economic concepts; the roles of metaphor in discourse; etc. Our analysis focuses on meaning, more exactly, on the evaluative components certain increase / decrease metaphors actualize in contexts.

For this purpose we selected only the evaluative lexical items belonging to the respective paradigm. The core meaning of these metaphors includes a scalar component referring to the extent of the variation. In some cases the increase of the economic

indicator is characterized as great, higher than expected or higher than 'normal' (*escalar, escalada, estar por las nubes, dispararse, inflarse* [1]) whereas in other cases it is evaluated as lower than the 'normal', expected or desired level of rise in each indicator's case (*remontar, recuperarse, recuperación* [2]). Falling trend is usually assessed as surpassing the 'normal' level (*desplomarse, hundirse, estar por los suelos* [3]). Metaphors can also include other types of evaluative charges. For example, organic metaphors incorporate a whole hierarchy of axiological values whose poles are life and death. It is the result of our everyday experience with our own bodies and those of plants, animals or other people's. Saying that *las exportaciones se recuperan* ('exports are recovering') is implying the conceptualization of exports as a living organism that has suffered from illness and is gradually overcoming it. As a result, the growth in exports is assessed as a positive or favourable trend.

	Central Bank report corpus		Business media corpus	
	Number of occurrences	Frequency per 10,000 words	Number of occurrences	Frequency per 10,000 words
<i>caída</i> (‘fall’)	92	9.67	79	10.92
<i>recaída</i> (‘repeated fall’)	1	0.1	5	0.69
<i>caer</i> (‘to fall’)	15	1.57	50	6.91
<i>empuje</i> (‘push’)	1	0.1	3	0.41
<i>lastrar</i> (‘to ballast’)	2	0.21	3	0.41
<i>arrastrar, arrastre</i> (‘to drag’, ‘dragging’)	2	0.21	4	0.55
<i>recuperarse</i> (‘to recover’)	5	0.52	10	1.38
<i>recuperación</i> (‘recovery’)	65	6.83	38	5.25
Total number of words	95,044 words		72,340 words	

Table 1. Frequency of increase / decrease evaluative metaphors in the specialized corpus and in the medium specialized one  
Source: Author

Furthermore, metaphor selection was carried out on a frequency basis in two distinct discourse genres. Firstly, we took into account the use of evaluative increase / decrease



metaphors in the media. The expressions in focus were selected on account of their high recurrence in similar contexts in the business sections of general newspapers (*El Mundo*, *El País*) and of daily circulation business publications (*Cinco Días*). As compared to other discourse genres, apart from informing the audience, the media is keen on realizing 'textual goals such as sustaining reader's interest, establishing authorial identity, evaluation and other stylistic considerations such as humour and the branding of a particular style' (Charteris-Black and Musolff 2003, p. 158). Metaphor plays a key role in the accomplishment of these aims, along with word puns, hyperboles, etc. As expected, the list of metaphors containing evaluative components with reference to business trends is very large.

The same type of research was carried out on a specialized corpus made up of Spanish Central Bank reports. In view to preserve more or less the same size we stuck to the publication *Boletín Económico 10/2013* containing 95,044 words. The research revealed that out of all increase / decrease metaphors frequent in the media, only some of them occur repeatedly in the central bank report. According to the data included in Table 1, the most recurrent are the nouns *caída* and *recuperación*. From a comparative point of view, frequencies are relatively similar. Perhaps it is worth mentioning that nominalizations are more recurrent in the specialized corpus than in the media one, in which verbs (*caer*, *recuperarse*) register more instances than nouns. Table 1 does not include the metaphorical expressions frequent in the media which have registered no occurrence in the bank report.

As follows, we set out to analyse the evaluative function metaphors fulfil in these two types of discourses as well as the implications of value presence in texts.

### *Oriental metaphors*

The path metaphor seems to have deep roots in economic thought. McCloskey (1995, p. 215) observed that, when choosing the market metaphor, 'economists are driven to identify a demand curve, a supply curve, and a price'. As mentioned in the introductory section, orientational metaphors reflect the conceptualization of variation in quantity or value as a source – path – goal movement of an animate entity. The greatest part of them place the movement on a vertical axis, codifying increase as upwards movement (MORE IS UP), while decrease is downwards (LESS IS DOWN).

From an evaluative perspective, the increase can be evaluated as higher than expected or considered 'normal'. A highly relevant issue in analyzing the evaluative function of metaphors is defining the concept of 'normal level'. Radden and Dirven (2007, p. 130) call it an 'implicit norm' depending on the semantic frame (Fillmore 1985) of each argument. According to their theory, quantifying means comparing to a norm and consequently situating along a scale. In most cases the reference level is not expressed in the context, but the use of the metaphor is the result of previous cognitive operations of comparing.

For example, the decrease words *desplomarse* ('to collapse') and *desplome* ('collapse') are made explicit by the percentage quantifiers: **34%** in the case of the indicator *margen de intereses* ('interest rate') in context (2); by **4%** with respect to share values (3); by **19.7%** about the land value in (4); and by the phrase *a la mitad* ('to half of its value') with reference to income (*ingresos*) in context number (1). Firstly, in each case, the mentioned percentages are compared to the value or set of values the economic indicator registered in the past. In many context these values as well as the span are specified: **4,7 millones** ('4.7 million') (1); **10 meses en mínimos** ('10 months minimum values') (5). Secondly, the increase / decrease amount is compared against an implicit reference level concerning the usual, normal, expected or desired amount of variation.

- (1) *Banco Financiero y de Ahorros (BFA) ha estrenado 2011 con una fuerte caída de las principales líneas de la cuenta de resultados. La sociedad donde han trasladado todos sus activos Caja Madrid, Bancaja y otras cinco cajas locales registró hasta marzo un desplome del 34% en el margen de intereses.* CD, 11/05/2011
- (2) *En dos años, los ingresos por este concepto se han desplomado casi a la mitad (de 4,7 millones a 2,5).* ELPS, 10/03/2011
- (3) *Gas Natural se hunde en Bolsa por la salida de GDF Suez. Las acciones de Gas Natural se han desplomado un 4% en su vuelta al parque madrileño después de que fueran suspendidas de negociación por parte de la CNMV a primera hora de la mañana.* ELM, 10/09/2010
- (4) *El suelo, por los suelos. El valor del los solares se desploma un 19,7% desde junio a septiembre.* ELM, 17/12/2010

- (5) *Tras 10 meses en mínimos respecto al dólar, la moneda única remonta impulsada por el acuerdo de los líderes europeos para rescatar a Grecia.* ELM, 26.03.2010

Establishing the implicit norm compared to which the increase or the decrease is evaluated as too high or too low is based on domain specific knowledge about each and every economic indicator such as the definition of the respective concept, the hierarchy of concepts to which it belongs, historical data, concrete situational background data, etc. Thus, although evaluation takes as starting point objective information, namely documented historical data, its results are subjective due to the evaluator's experience, to his/her level of expertise in the field, to the way in which s/he perceives the data or the facts, etc. The second type of comparison remains unperceived by most readers mainly because the reference is implicit and such metaphors are used on a large scale in similar contexts. Therefore, on the one hand, metaphor can act as a vehicle for the specialized content, in the sense that it conveys the interpretation of domain specific phenomena to readers who are not familiar with economics. On the other hand, the respective interpretation is subjective to a certain degree, being the result of complex cognitive processes involving a specific person's expertise, his/her data integration and analysis.

Moreover, the use of metaphors in the media needs to suit the textual goals we have mentioned. That is why, plastic hyperboles as in (4), which is a headline actually, are quite often, being destined to attract readers' attention and have a certain emotional impact. Evaluative lexicon and especially, metaphors are very frequent not only in editorials but in news reports as well. However, readers are not always informed of the evaluator's expertise in economics. Charteris-Black and Musolff (2003, p. 158) point out that in financial reporting 'the writer may well have a covert agenda that is implicitly conveyed by particular lexical choices. It is important that second language learners are able to pick up on these more covert meanings as well as on the more conventional meanings of buried metaphors'. We wish to add that not only second language learners should be aware of the hidden meanings metaphors carry in contexts but native readers should also be able to spot biased language present in the media. This is highly relevant since economic issues are often used in persuasion strategies related to politics or commercial choices. [4]

However, neither *desplomarse* nor *remontar* are used in the central bank report as the data in Table 1 indicate, although they are very frequent in the media, especially

*desplomarse* (Pecican 2013). The overall impression resulting from the data in Table 1 is that the more specialized type of discourse employs evaluative metaphors to a lesser extent. Furthermore, the data indicate the existence of a difference in terms of lexical choice between the two types of economic discourse genres. For example, metaphors referring to too high increases frequently used in the media such as *escalar / escalada, encaramarse, estar por las nubes*[5], *disparar(se)* are not present in the central bank report. Similarly, huge falls are not expressed by *desplomarse / desplome, hundirse / hundimiento, desmoronarse / desmoronamiento, arrastrar, en caída libre, caer en picado, estar por los suelos*[6] in the bank report as opposed to the news reporting. In exchange, those expressions which contain intermediately evaluative components are preferred in the specialized discourse. In other words, if the expressions in focus were to be situated along a scale related to the increase / decrease extent, the ones used in the bank report would occupy an intermediate position. It is the case of *caer, caída, recaída, lastrar, empuje*. [7] The lexical items referring to excessive fall or rise would be placed at the upper ends of the scale. Therefore, the central bank report seems to keep distance towards evaluating economic trends as much greater than the norm. On the one hand this can be explained by the fact that there is no such objective, widely shared concept related to 'the GDP / inflation / share value normal increase / decrease'. On the other hand, the textual goals of this discourse genre are not to impress or attract readers but to inform economic experts on the real situation of the economy at a certain moment in time as thoroughly as possible.

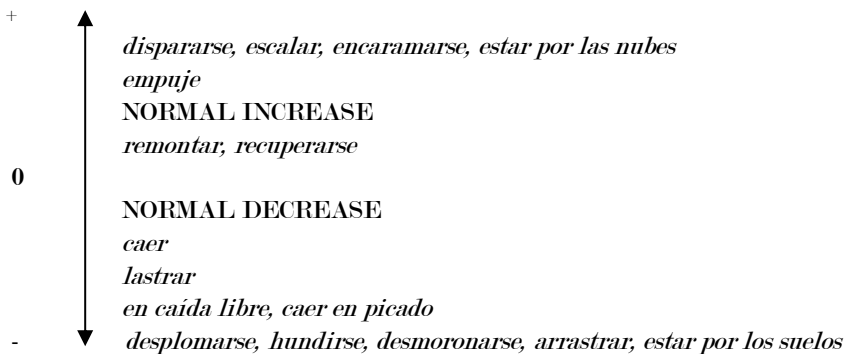


Figure 1. Scale of evaluation extent in the case of increase / decrease orientational metaphors

Source: Pecican 2013, p. 235

Moreover, linguistic contexts in the central bank report usually contain explicit evaluative lexicon in addition to halfway evaluative metaphors as in: *la caída de la demanda es tan intensa* ('the fall in demand is so intense') (BE 10/2013, p. 29); *el recurso a la financiación se ha reducido de forma muy significativa* ('the appeal to financing has dropped significantly') (BE 10/2013, p. 93).

- (1) *En el contexto de la crisis de deuda soberana, el valor del aval del Estado español se ha visto afectado por las rebajas de su calificación crediticia, que han arrastrado además a la de la mayoría de los emisores residentes.* BE 10/2013, p. 93

Nevertheless, metaphors containing hyperboles can also be found in the central bank report. The verb *arrastrar* ('to drag') literally refers to the action of putting someone or something to the ground in a violent manner. Since the ground is prototypically conceptualized as the maximum level that can be reached by a falling entity, the metaphorical mapping would result in qualifying decrease as massive, much greater than the 'normal' fall. Considering the decline in crediting funds qualification as massive, the way it happens in context (6), is not merely the result of an objective data comparison but it also reflects the author's interpretation of the respective data. Moreover, the semantic component related to violence indicates an axiological interpretation as well. Concretely, the respective fall is viewed as negatively affecting the crediting funds. This axiological value assignment relies on the capitalist manner of approaching economic phenomena, according to which funds crediting SME's are a good thing for economy leading to the economic growth and prosperity of the respective businesses.

### *Organic metaphors*

Organic metaphors used to refer to increase or decrease trends on the market are not numerous in Spanish (*recuperarse, resentirse, adelgazar, engordar*[8]). Nevertheless, they belong to an entire model used in economics together with other expressions such

as *fortaleza, debilidad, saneamiento, balón de oxígeno* [9], recurrent metaphors in economic discourse.

Two largely used linguistic forms of the metaphor INCREASE IS HEALING are the verb *recuperarse* ('to recover') and the derived noun *recuperación* ('recovery'). They occur in similar contexts and with a similar frequency both in the media and in the central bank report; therefore, as follows, they will be treated irrespective of the discourse genre. As it was briefly mentioned in the introductory section of this study, the target domain meaning related to quantitative increase, inherits through the metaphorical mapping a specific axiological system of values. Concretely, saying that *el dólar se recuperó ligeramente frente al euro* ('the dollar slightly recovered against the euro') is imagining the US currency as a living organism healing after previous illness. The metaphorical mapping polarizes the target domain in such a way that increase in currency value is good / positive while previous lower values are considered negative or unfavorable. Actually, *recuperarse* and *recuperación* are not specific to living organisms or, in other words, the healing related meaning is also metaphorical, having its origins in the domain of possession. As a result of the experience we have with our own bodies, we tend to conceptualize health, vigor, good condition, etc. as part of our own being or as a possession. Experiencing illness or injury corresponds to losing something that naturally belongs to oneself. Consequently, *recuperarse* is getting back the lost possession, the normal physical and psychological states or healing. This first metaphorical meaning related to health extended to the economic domain. As regards the context mentioned above, the use of the metaphorical verb *recuperarse* indicates that high dollar values are conceptualized as something that is natural, normal for the respective currency, part of its integrity. Perhaps shared knowledge about upper values the dollar had reached in the past motivates this assumption. Nevertheless, choosing those values as the norm, as the ideal evolution of the currency, is part of a specific perspective upon currencies and, we may add, upon international politics.

The axiological polarization INCREASE IS GOOD, DECREASE IS BAD incorporated in the recovering metaphor is commonly shared in the case of currencies, employment, economic growth, GDP, etc. The situation is different in the case of other economic indicators such as prices, inflation or unemployment. Collocations as *la inflación se recupera* ('inflation is recovering') and *el desempleo se recupera* ('unemployment is recovering') would sound quite strange as in nowadays capitalist economy these indicators' rise is viewed as unfavorable or negative which comes into

conflict with the metaphoric polarity. As for prices, the situation is somewhat different. On the one hand, producers may consider the rise in prices a positive situation as a probable result would be an increase in income (8). On the other hand, consumers do not see the upwards trend in prices as a good fact mainly because they will have to spend more money on shopping. Research on the two corpora reveal that *recuperarse* / *recuperación* are used to modify such names of economic indicators as *el Mercado* ('the market'), *la economía* ('economy'), *la actividad* ('the activity'), *el crecimiento económico* ('economic growth'), *las exportaciones* ('exports'), *el PIB* ('GDP'), *los servicios* ('services'), *las ventas* ('sales'), *la inversión* ('investment'), *la zona euro* ('the euro zone'), *la recaudación de impuestos* ('tax collection'), etc. Collocations as *las tasas / los impuestos se recuperan* ('taxes are recovering') for example, were not identified in neither of the two corpora and are less likely to be found.

Nevertheless, in the case of economic indicators as credit (9) or consumption (10) increase is not considered a 'good' trend in any situation. The general capitalist consideration according to which economic growth supported by bank loans or consumption is good was contested in the context of the recent subprime crisis. However, as a result of its use on a large scale both in the media and in bank reports, the recovering metaphor has become opaque to a certain extent. Ideological meaning components are not obvious to everybody, especially in contexts lacking other evaluative lexical items as it often happens in more specialized text types. In other contexts, even in the bank report, additional evaluative lexicon (*deterioro* ('deterioration') en (8); *desfavorables perspectivas* ('unfavorable perspectives') en (9)) revitalizes the metaphoric polarizing potential.

- (7) *Los precios de la leche en origen han empezado a **recuperarse**. Tras más de una campaña hundidos, han aumentado ligeramente.* ELPS, 07/02/2011
- (8) *El deterioro de la calidad crediticia de los prestatarios, vinculado al propio ciclo económico, frena también **la recuperación del crédito.***, BE 10/2013 p. 91
- (9) *Con todo, el bajo nivel de renta, las todavía desfavorables perspectivas del mercado laboral y el elevado endeudamiento de las familias no permiten prever una **recuperación sensible del consumo** a corto plazo.* BE 10/2013, p. 16

All in all, we can conclude that the use of *recuperarse* in specific contexts reflects a complex ideological system underlying the capitalist framework governing nowadays economy.

## Informing /vs./ persuading

According to McCloskey (2007, pp. 10-13) language plays two major roles in economy: the transmittal of information on the one hand and on the other hand, that of persuading people to buy, sell, provide support, have a certain opinion, etc., the latter being 'a very large item in modern economy' (2007, p. 13). As regards the two discourse genres we have studied, both reports are committed to informing their readers about economic facts happening in a certain period of time. However, the data indicate that the news report is also focused on persuading. The target is not necessarily to manipulate people or bias their interpretation of economic phenomena, but to attract their attention, capture and maintain their interest in the subject in order for them to buy the respective issue or visit the publication web page. This explains the common practice in the media to wrap the news items in emotionally impressive or humorous words. Metaphors, hyperboles or puns are just a few of the linguistic devices present in headlines and throughout the texts. As compared to news style, the one used in the central bank report may seem quite 'boring' as the discourse is mainly destined towards informing economic experts. The corpus indicates that transmitting information is the dominant goal in the case of the bank report. However, factual assessment of economic phenomena is also present (6, 9, 10). The recurrent use of overtly evaluative lexicon indicates that the authors assume the responsibility for their interpretation on the described economic realities.

In terms of metaphor use, a striking difference between the two discourse genres is the recurrence of metaphors expressing rise or fall in great, even excessive amount (1 - 4), while in the bank report very few occurrences of such words were identified. The latter genre prefers more explicit lexical items in expressing this meaning. Moreover, the evaluative metaphors employed in the bank report refer to intermediate increases / decreases (Table 1). On the contrary, the media uses more covert evaluative metaphors expressing all types of variation: excessive falls (*desplome, hundimiento*), excessive rises (*escalalar, escalada*), low rises (*remontar, recuperarse*), etc. The evaluative charge regarding quantitative variation is hidden in such metaphors fore and foremost on account of their high frequency in similar contexts. This makes readers fail to perceive the relation with the source domain and skip meaning content related to the implicit norm according to which fall is interpreted as a collapse (1 - 4), for example.



The second part of the analysis addresses the case of the most frequent organic metaphor referring to business trends, namely, *recuperarse* and *recuperación*. Although the expressions also contain semantic components related to quantitative evaluation of the increase, the analysis focused on the axiological meaning. The collocations of the type 'economic indicator X *se recupera*' mean that X slightly increases after having reached low values at the same time assessing the rise as 'good' while the previous values are considered an unfavorable evolution. Even if the good – bad scale assigned to economic trends can often pass unperceived, it is deeply rooted in the capitalist framework underlying nowadays economic thought.

The issues related to hidden values present in metaphors are especially relevant in nowadays society in which information is often communicated from certain perspectives, in more or less objective manners. Economic information is no exception. Additionally, reports tend to make repeated use of the lexicon referring to increase / decrease of economic indicators, which leads to metaphor conventionalization and hence to evaluative opacity. The present study invites economists as well as economics teachers and students to reflect on metaphor as a vehicle for subjective and ideological content. The two discourse genres taken into account as corpora of metaphor use play an important role in economics and economy as providers of information to business actors, experts, decision makers, etc. The aim of the research is to make metaphor users aware of values present in the transmitted information by means of certain metaphors. The analysis highlights the fingerprint of the capitalist framework on evaluative patterns such as the assignment of axiological values to economic trends. We wish to point out that the use of metaphor is not entirely objective as it may pretend to be, even though the high recurrence tends to affect their evaluative potential. In other cases, metaphor use is directly correlated with the textual goals of the discourse genre they occur in. Therefore, economists should take into account the subjective facet of metaphors when dealing with information expressed by them, since they play an active role in opinion forming and in consolidating certain ideological frameworks related to economy.

## Endnotes

[1] 'To escalate', 'escalate', 'to be up in the clouds', 'to shoot', 'to inflate'

[2] 'to go upstream', 'to recover', 'recovery'

[3] 'to collapse', 'to sink', 'to be all over the ground'

[4] We do not wish to relate the quoted contexts to the existence of biasing policies in the source newspapers but to signal the possibility that metaphoric lexicon can become part of such manipulating practices.

[5] 'To escalate / escalation', 'to climb up', 'to be up in the clouds', 'to shoot'. The idea of massive growth is the result of metaphorical mappings to the target concept of increase in amount or value of source domains related to the rapid movement of an animate entity towards a destination situated at a large distance: the peak of a mountain (scalar / escalada), the clouds (estar por las nubes), etc.

[6] 'To collapse / collapse', 'to sink / sinking', 'to collapse / collapse', 'to drag', 'free fall', 'to plummet', 'to be all over the ground'. The quantitative evaluation of fall as great is based on the idea of falling from a starting point situated a long distance above the ground (desplomarse, desmoronarse, estar por los suelos), or that of going deep into the water (hundirse). These metaphors also include axiological values as the entity in the source domain is negatively affected: deteriorated (desplomarse, desmoronarse) or behaving in an uncontrolled way (en caída libre, caer en picado, hundirse). Thus, they characterize the respective trend as negative or 'bad'. Due to space limitations, in the present section, we shall stick to the quantitative evaluation while the axiological meaning components are to be examined in the section referring to organic metaphors.

[7] 'To fall', 'fall', 'repeated fall', 'to ballast', 'push'. We consider these metaphorical expressions as intermediately evaluative on account of the source domain phenomenon involved in each metaphorical mapping. For example, the intensity of a falling movement is lower than that of a collapse, while the movement referred to by lastrar is controlled by an exterior force and it usually does not cover large distances. With respect to empujar, the push implies effort but there is no reference to a high destination as in the case of escalar for example. These metaphors tend to become conventional or dead and hence lose the evaluative potential more easily than those

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referring to highly intense phenomena. The reasons can be related to their high use in similar contexts, and, to their intermediate degree of intensity.

[8] 'To recover', 'to be affected', 'to lose weight', 'to put weight'.

[9] 'Strength', 'weakness', 'sanitation', 'oxygen tank'.

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ELM, *El Mundo.es*, [www.elmundo.es](http://www.elmundo.es)

ELPS, *El País.com*, [www.elpais.com](http://www.elpais.com)

CD, *Cinco Días.com*, [www.cincodias.com](http://www.cincodias.com)

## Appendix

1. Banco Financiero y de Ahorros (BFA) started 2011 with a sharp drop income. The society where Caja Madrid, Bancaja and five other local banks moved all assets have recorded plummeting 34% in interest rate until March.
2. In two years, this revenue plunged to almost half of its previous value (from 4.7 million to 2.5).
3. Gas Natural plunges in Stock Exchange due to GDF Suez launching. Gas Natural shares slumped 4% on return to Madrid Stock Exchange after they were suspended from trading by the CNMV first thing in the morning.
4. The solar, to the ground. The solar value plummets 19.7% from June to September.
5. After 10 months minimum against the dollar, the euro remounts encouraged by European leaders' agreement to rescue Greece.

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6. In the context of the sovereign debt crisis, the value of the Spanish state guarantee has been affected by credit rating downgrades, which dragged especially the ratings of most resident funding issuers.
7. Milk price in origin has begun to recover. After plunging last campaign they have slightly increased.
8. The deterioration in the credit qualification of borrowers, linked with the economic cycle itself, also slows down the credit recovery.
9. However, the low level of income, the still unfavorable labor market prospects and high household indebtedness do not allow us to forecast a noticeable recovery in consumption in the short term.

Anca Pecican is Assistant Lecturer at Bucharest University of Economic Studies (Romania) (ancapecican@yahoo.com).