COGNITIVE-BASED TRANSLATION ANALYSIS

Nasrallah BENCHERKI
Doctoral Student Translation Institute
Ahmed Ben Bella University – Oran 1
(Algeria)
belhiatahar80@gmail.com

Pr. Tahar BELEHIA
Translation Institute
Ahmed Ben Bella University – Oran 1
(Algeria)
n.bencherki@cuniv-naama.dz

Received: 28/04/2026 **Accepted:** 20/05/2026 **Published:** 09/06/ 2026

Abstract :
This paper aims at using a cognitive approach to analyze the translation of the metaphor known as "extended metaphor ". The used cognitive approach was developed by the French researcher Gilles Fauconnier, based in America, and called "cognitive blending ". He conceived it with his American colleague Mark Turner. This cognitive analysis is hoped to yield at least two benefits: the first one, it will provide the translator with a new tool to critically analyze the translation of the metaphor itself; and the second one, it will enable the translator to broaden his understanding of the metaphor within the original text, thereby enhancing the translation process and ultimately achieving the goal that modern translation studies aspire to: that is a powerful tool to interpret meanings, not merely transmitting them.

Key Words
Cognitive approach, extended metaphor, cognitive blending, conceptual space

* Corresponding author: **Nasrallah BENCHERKI**

Historical Background

The cognitive approach is no longer a new one to translation studies, as since the 1990s, theorists recognized its potential to open new horizons in research for translation process analysis. Though this approach is closely related to psychology, it has established its own field of study, cognitive psychology, alongside cognitive linguistics and other disciplines.

The American scholar George A. Miller was one of the first researchers in the cognitive approach, his book "Language and Communication" published in 1951 is a seminal work in this regard[1]. Miller said: “In 1951, I was still hoping, it seemed to me, to gain scientific recognition for my allegiance to Behaviorism. Five years later, when I was influenced by colleagues such as Noam Chomsky and Jerry Bruner, I stopped hoping, and so I date the cognitive revolution in psychology to those years, the early 1950s.”[2]

Miller went on to list the research that was being carried out within the cognitive approach: “While experimental psychologists were trying to rethink the definition of psychology, important developments were taking place in other fields. Norbert Wiener’s cybernetics was beginning to gain popularity, Marvin Minsky and John McCarthy were starting to develop artificial intelligence, and Alan Newel and Herb Simon were beginning to use computers to simulate cognitive processes. Finally, Chomsky was alone redefining linguistics.”

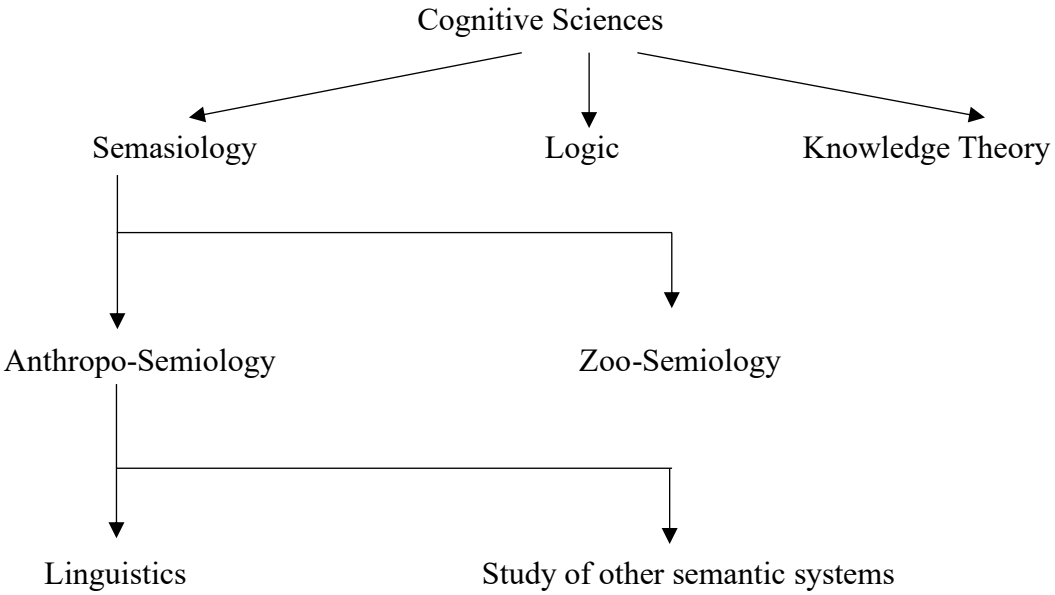
As for the “moment of the conception of the embryo,” Miller dates it to 1956: “I date the moment of the conception of cognitive science to September 11, 1956, which was the second day of the symposium organized by the Information Theory Special Interest Group at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.”[3]

By 1960, it was clear that something of an interdisciplinary field was beginning to emerge. Miller and his fellow researchers at Harvard called it ‘cognitive studies,’ Carnegie Mellon called it ‘information processing psychology,’ and La Jolla called it ‘cognitive science.’ The name given to these studies did not matter until 1976.[4]

What does Cognitive Sciences consist of?

Miller argued that cognitive science encompasses at least six disciplines: psychology, linguistics, neuroscience, anthropology, and philosophy. He consistently placed psychology, linguistics, and computer science at the center, with the other three peripheries[5].

The relationship between the topics included in cognitive science led to the following diagram:



The field of knowledge that attracts our attention in this article is linguistics, which has taken on a new form thanks to these studies. This new form has been added to other linguistic approaches and is now called "cognitive linguistics," pioneered, as previously mentioned, by Noam Chomsky, who relied on information theory to highlight "transformational generative grammar" for all researchers[6].

If we seek to define cognitive linguistics, we find that it is not a single theory, but rather a scientific framework within general linguistics that encompasses distinct theories and research programs. The primary focus of these theories and research is to explain the intimate relationship between language and other cognitive competencies[7].

Cognitive linguistics began to emerge in the 1970s, and then expanded in the mid-1980s to include broad areas of general linguistics, such as syntax, semantics, phonetics, discourse, and others[8]. After this, it became necessary for the science of translation to be influenced by the sciences and the cognitive approach, just as linguistics was influenced by them, and it is historically and organically linked to linguistics, until a large sector of the science of translation became linked to the cognitive approach, and some modern research even considers the science of translation to be a cognitive science[9].

Michel Politis, a Greek researcher interested in applying the cognitive approach, lists some of the earliest cognitive research in the field of translation, which was

based primarily on viewing translation as a "cognitive process": "One of the first experimental attempts to study the translation process was the application of the 'Think Aloud Protocol' (TAP) methodology. Maurice Pergnier's experiment (1980) was followed by other experiments such as those carried out by Wolfgang Lörcher, Hans-Peter Krings, Julianne House, Donald Charles Kiraly, and Paul Kussmaul[10].

In our research, we see “metaphor” among the points of convergence between translation studies and cognitive linguistics, and indeed the cognitive approach in general, which is worthy of research and a fertile source of new ideas.

What is Metaphor?

As for Western rhetoricians, metaphor is a rhetorical device in which an abstract meaning is transferred to a concrete expression by replacing the abstract with the concrete without resorting to simile or comparison[11]. The English critic I. A. Richards lists the elements of metaphor as follows:

The subject of the metaphor, or what he called its tenor, i.e., the "comparable"; the vehicle or vehicle of the metaphor, i.e., the "comparable"; and the ground, which is the purely abstract, mental element under whose influence the process of analogy between the tenor and the vehicle takes place. This element includes the "intention behind the metaphor's construction" and the "point of similarity between the tenor and the vehicle." This element, in Richards' view, is the most difficult aspect of analyzing literary metaphor[12].

Western rhetoricians, in turn, divided metaphor into several categories, which are also beyond the scope of this discussion: “Anthropomorphic metaphor,” “Concretive metaphor,” “Animistic metaphor,” and “Synaesthetic metaphor.”[13]

However, the question that should have been asked before this presentation is: what is the specific characteristic that makes metaphor so important?

We might find someone defining metaphor as "an expression in which one or more phrases undergo a situational change in meaning." Such a definition presupposes a semantic analysis of metaphor[14].

Another definition of metaphor might conceive of it as "mentioning one thing and intending another," a definition that clearly presupposes a pragmatic approach to metaphor, one that undoubtedly differs from the first, semantic approach. These two facts undeniably highlight that metaphor is an arena of competition between semantics and pragmatics.

Various cognitive studies have confirmed that metaphor, in addition to the prevailing view that it refers to a comparison (or simile, as Arab rhetoricians consider it), is an attributive assertion, not merely a comparison. For example, when we say, "This work is a prison," we are attributing the prominent characteristics of the category "prison" to the work we are describing[15].

Cognitive Blending

Now we come to the methodology we adopt for studying metaphor, which is based on the theory of "cognitive blending" developed by Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner, starting from the "theory of mental spaces" by Gilles Fauconnier, born in 1985. The theory of mental spaces aims to reveal the hidden relationships between elements of the various mental models created by speakers, relationships that enter into a wide network of semantic events such as scope ambiguities, negation, counterfactuals, and opacity effects[16].

One of the foundations of cognitive blending is the ideas presented by George Lakoff in his book, *Women, Fire and Dangerous Things*[17]. Cognitive blending is also linked to theories of cognitive architecture and frame-based theories, such as those of Marvin Minsky, Jaime Carbonell, and others[18]. Fauconnier and Turner first presented the theory of cognitive blending in 1993, and this was highlighted in their book, *The Way We Think*[19]. According to cognitive blending theory, vital elements and relationships belonging to different perspectives "blend" in a subconscious process known as "cognitive blending." This process is considered a constant presence in everyday thought and language. The insights resulting from this blending constitute the product of creative thinking[20].

This space may not permit a full presentation of the prominent aspects of cognitive blending theory, so we refer researchers to its various sources. What concerns us here is that this theory or methodology (which we are adopting as a methodology for analyzing metaphor in the translation process) undertakes two main tasks:

First, its focus on metaphor within a text or long textual passages, which is termed "extended metaphor."

Secondly, its attributive property, as it attributes the characteristics of one semantic field or space to another semantic field or space.

Cognitive Blending Analysis of Metaphor

1. Corpus Description

The chosen corpus is the first part of the novel "The Stranger" (L'Étranger) by Albert Camus, which is originally divided into two parts[21].

The novel "The Stranger" has been translated into forty languages and sold 6.7 million copies. It was first published in 1942 and has been adapted into other art forms since 1967. Camus, winner of the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1957, has

inspired countless critics, philosophers, and thinkers, and continues to do so. He not only presented a literary approach but also a philosophical perspective rooted in existentialism. The philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre, one of the greatest knights of existentialism if not its foremost, considers the novel "The Stranger" to be essentially a prominent example of Camus's theory of the "Absurd," as is the case with Camus's play "Caligula" (published in 1938 and revised in 1958) and the literary essay "The Myth of Sisyphus" (published in 1942)[22]. Therefore, according to Sartre and many critics and thinkers after him, Camus's trilogy (Caligula, The Myth of Sisyphus, and The Stranger) is considered the central core of Camusian theory of the absurd. The novel The Stranger, in particular, has provoked numerous interpretations: political, philosophical, psychological, and others. What concerns us in describing this work are a few key points that will simplify this description, as space does not permit a more detailed explanation. These points pave the way for the conclusions we will draw from applying the methodology of cognitive synthesis to the extended metaphor in the first part of The Stranger. We will present these points as follows:

First, Édouard Morot-Sir reminds us of the titles that Camus considered for the novel "The Stranger" before choosing the title "The Stranger," which are as follows: "Shame" (La Pudeur), "A Happy Man" (Un Homme heureux), "A Free Man" (Un Homme libre), "A Man Like Others" (Un Homme comme les autres)[23].

Secondly, "Moro-Ser" is considered, above all, the "stranger," that detached human being capable of seeing himself with transparency and insight[24].

Thirdly, Sartre says of the "neutral writing" (L'écriture neutre) in the simple past tense (Passé composé simple), in which the novel was written, that it: "increases the solitude of each sentence unit"[25].

Sartre said: "The stranger described by the writer is precisely the most terrible of innocents who create a scandal in a society, since he does not accept the rules of the game in that society. He lives among strangers, but he is also a stranger in their eyes… We search in vain to judge him according to our accustomed standards: he is, for us too, a stranger."[26]

From the above, we can conclude that the protagonist of the novel, Meursault, suffers from two prominent characteristics: "uniqueness" and "loneliness," and this is what we will highlight in the application.

2. Target Domain

In this application, we use cognitive synthesis to study the "extended metaphor" found across 29 pages of the first section of the novel "The Stranger." We have previously stated that this type of metaphor is examined in long textual passages.

The process of cognitive blending occurs through the combination of two mental spaces, a "source" and a "target." Once these two spaces are linked, understanding and perceiving the metaphor become part of the "blending process," which allows the two spaces to blend together and form the metaphor, rather than one simply clinging to the other without organic connection.

Through our analysis of the first part of the novel, we found that the protagonist, Meursault, operates within a confined space: his small apartment in Algiers, and his workplace, which is not far from it. This is illustrated by the following two exemplary passages, among others: the first demonstrates a tangible physical isolation, and the second a psychological isolation from others.

First Example:

Je ne vis plus que dans cette pièce. L'appartement est trop grand pour moi et j'ai dû transporter dans ma chambre la table de la salle à manger.

This passage clearly highlights the confined physical space in which the protagonist-narrator lives, revealing a self-imposed isolation and seclusion that is partly a choice he makes for himself. In the first part of the novel, this space is comprised of three locations: the apartment, the workplace, and the nursing home, with the apartment being the dominant element.

Second Example :

Ce n'est pas de ma faute.

This was Meursault's response to his disgruntled employer, who was upset that his employee would be taking a short leave to attend his deceased mother's funeral. He said, "It's not my fault," referring to his mother's death. Undoubtedly, such a response reveals the extent of the protagonist-narrator's emotional isolation, even towards his closest relative, his mother, whom he had previously placed in a nursing home in a suburb of Algiers. He is thus emotionally distant from his mother and indifferent to the details of her feelings, to the point that he did not even want to look at her face as she lay in her coffin, her lifeless body forever enclosed.

3. Source Domain

Now that we have uncovered some of the features of the targeted space, characterized by "solitude," "isolation," and "liberation" from attachment to others, even on an emotional and sentimental level, and even from those closest to him, In our view, the writer sought to highlight the characteristics of this space through an extended metaphor, borrowing some of its features from another space, which we call the "targeted space," namely, "the space of birds." We will illustrate this with the following examples:

First Example:

(…) ***on aurait dit d'un jacassement assourdi de perruches.*** **[p.11]**

This sentence describes the sounds of the elderly people talking amongst themselves, when the protagonist—the narrator—was at the nursing home attending his mother's funeral. The illustrative phrase, or rather the "cognitive reference"[27], written in bold, clearly uses a characteristic of the mental space of the bird world to describe the sounds of the elderly talking amongst themselves, comparing these sounds to those made by budgerigars.

Second Example:

(…) ***Ce qui me frappait dans leurs visages, c'est que je ne voyais pas leurs yeux, mais seulement une lueur sans éclat au milieu d'un nid de rides.*** **[p.17]**

Here we find the cognitive reference indicating another metaphor from the realm of birds, where the many wrinkles on the faces of the elderly are described as if they were birds' nests.

Third Example:

(…) ***Vernie, oblongue et brillante, elle faisait penser à un plumier*****.** **[p.24]**

This phrase came in the description of the coffin car, and the translator may rush and try to translate the reference to knowledge indicated by the pencil case or pen box, and there is no doubt that the suggestion of feathers is clear, so in order to take into account the extended metaphor, attention should be paid to this suggestion.

Fourth Example:

(…) ***ma joie quand l'autobus est entré dans le nid de lumières d'Alger***. **[p.29]**

Here, upon the protagonist-narrator's return from the nursing home to Algiers, he describes the city and its lights as he enters it, as the aforementioned reference clearly indicates, as a nest of lights.

From the preceding examples, we can deduce that, throughout the first twenty-nine pages of the first section of the novel, the author borrows from the realm of birds to elaborate on the space surrounding his protagonist.

Therefore, we can conclude that the source space in this extended metaphor is "the realm of birds."

4. Source Domain

By combining the two aforementioned spaces, the process of extended metaphor becomes clear, and we obtain a space resulting from the merging of the two spaces. Cognitive blending theory considers this space to be a self-contained space with its own structure, containing elements not found in either of the two previous input domains. The challenge we must overcome to delve into the depths of extended metaphor using cognitive blending theory is to uncover the resulting blended space and demonstrate its structure and elements, independent of the two input domains.

From the writer’s desire to describe the space of the hero - the primary narrator, represented by his living environment and thoughts (the targeted space) and to use another space (the source space) in order to be able to do this description, a third space was produced, which is the space of blending, and we are forced to know it so that we can translate the metaphor correctly and critique the translation of this metaphor with a scholarly critique.

Let us examine how translators have dealt with the extended metaphor, some features of which we have already seen, by considering two translations.

The first, which we will denote as "T1," is the translation by Dr. Muhammad Ghatas, published by the Egyptian-Lebanese House in Cairo in 1418 AH/1997.

The second, which we will denote as "T2," is an anonymous translation, likely the work of a group of translators, published by the Cultural Library in Beirut in 1402 AH/1983.

Translation Analysis

First excerpt

*Nous avons traversé une cour où il y avait beaucoup de vieillards, bavardant par petits groupes. Ils se taisaient quand nous passions. Et derrière nous les conversations reprenaient. On aurait dit d'**un jacassement assourdi de perruches.** A la porte …* [p.11]

T1

ثم عبرنا فناءً به الكثير من المسنين الذين كانوا يتوقفون عن الحديث عندما كنا نمر بهم، ثم يتابعون ثرثرتهم بعد مرورنا. وأمام باب ...

T2

واجتزنا فناء فيه كثير من العجزة يثرثرون، وقد انقسموا إلى جماعات. وصمتوا حينما مررنا بهم، ثم استأنفوا الحديث بعد أن تجاوزناهم، وكان لحديثهم رنة صوت الببغاوات وثرثرتها. وعند الباب ...

Upon reading the two translations, we find that "T1" adopted an omission approach, leaving no trace of the metaphor. "T2," on the other hand, attempted to convey the metaphor into the target language, though the translation appears incomplete, while avoiding standard judgment and criticism. It presented the true nature of the bird (the parrot), while acknowledging the differences between the parrot and the budgerigar, despite some similarities. Therefore, the first translation completely eliminated the metaphor, while the second presented it incompletely.

Second excerpt

*Les hommes étaient presque tous très maigres et tenaient des cannes. Ce qui me frappait dans leurs visages, c'est que je ne voyais pas leurs yeux, mais seulement une lueur sans éclat au milieu **d'un nid de rides**.* [p.17]

T1

وكان الرجال تقريبا شديدي النحافة ويقبضون على عصي. ومن العجيب أنني لم أكن أرى لهم عيونا، بل فقط نوعا من الضوء الباهت وسط أخدود من التجاعيد.

T2

أما الرجال فكانوا في غاية الهزال وكان كل منهم يمسك بعصا. والشيء الذي أدهشني وأنا أتطلع إلى وجوههم، أني لم أستطع أن أتبين عيونهم، وكل ما رأيته هو وميض غير لامع في وسط حفرة من التجاعيد.

Here we find that neither translation eliminated the metaphor by omitting it, as "T1" did in the first passage, nor did they attempt to transfer it as "T2" did with the

same first passage. Rather, they eliminated the metaphor by resorting to "the true target space of the novel." Undoubtedly, this stems from a lack of understanding of the importance of extended metaphor in the original text**.**

Third excerpt

Devant la porte, il y avait la voiture. Vernie, oblongue et brillante, elle faisait penser à ***un plumier.*** *A côté d'elle …*

T1

أمام الباب، كانت هناك العربة، طويلة لامعة. إلى جانبها ...

T2

وأمام الباب كانت تقف، مجلوة، طويلة ولامعة، ويُخيَّل لمن يراها أنها ذات خطوط، وبجانبها كان يقف المشرف على الجنازة ...

Here we find a complete disregard for metaphor, as both translations adopted the approach of complete omission.

Fourth excerpt

(…) et ma joie quand l'autobus est entré dans ***le nid de lumières d'Alger****.* [*p.29*]

T1

(…) ثم سعادتي عندما دخل الأتوبيس إلى أضواء الجزائر العاصمة.

T2

(…) كما أذكر ابتهاجي حينما عاد بي الأتوبيس إلى مدينة الجزائر حيث استقبلتني أنوارها الساطعة (…)

Here too there is a complete disregard for metaphor by omitting it from the translation in both cases**.**

Conclusion

At the end of this research, and after reviewing some of the details of extended metaphor based on the theory of cognitive blending, we emphasize the importance of extensive research into this cognitive fact that is constant in language, whether intentionally by speakers of the same language or through their unconsciousness.

We have identified some of the details that make this metaphor extend over long textual passages, and it may even reach the point of including an entire author. This comes about by trying to reveal certain properties of a targeted space, which is the space close to what the speaker is trying to describe, relying on a source space that the speaker invokes and which may not have a direct existence in the speech situation that the speaker is in.

As we have seen, ignorance of the nature of extended metaphor and cognitive blending can lead the translator, and subsequently the translation critic, to overlook omissions or incomplete renderings that result in losses of meaning and style. In saying this, we do not consider literal translation the sole technique for dealing with this type of metaphor. Rather, we advocate for a thorough examination of the metaphor itself across extended sections of the text, or even the entire text, followed by consideration of the appropriate technique for conveying the metaphor (literal translation, equivalence, substitution, etc.) and then the suitable strategy (relying on the reader of the original text, the reader of the target text, the translation process, or other factors) to ensure the successful rendering of the metaphor.

The final point we deem crucial is the expansion and in-depth exploration of the blending space, which, as previously mentioned, is the space resulting from the fusion of the target and source spaces. This profound exploration, in our view, brings the translator closer to fulfilling the hermeneutical approach's task of participating in the construction of meaning alongside the author of the original text. Accurate understanding of this space allows the translator greater freedom from the language of the original utterance and greater control over a space they have extracted and expressed in their own language, according to a specific strategy.

---

[1] Miller, G.A. (1951). *Language and Communication*, McGraw-Hill

[2] Miller, G.A. « The Cognitive Revolution: A Historical Perspective », *TRENDS in Cognitive Science,* vol. 7, n° 3, March 2003, p. 141

[3] Miller, G.A. « The Cognitive Revolution: A Historical Perspective », *ibid.*, p. 142
[4] *Ibid*., p. 143
[5] *Ibid.* p. 143
[6] *Ibid.* p. 143
[7] Robert A. Wilson & Frank C. Keil. (1999) *The MIT Encyclopedia of the Cognitive Sciences*, Bradford Books, p. 134
[8] *Ibid*.p. 134
[9] Politis, M. (2007) « Introduction », *Meta*, vol. 52, n°1, p.2
[10] Politis, M. (2007) « L'apport de la psychologie cognitive à la didactique de la traduction », *Meta*, vol. 52, n°1, p.2
[11] Magdi Wahba (1974). Dictionary of Literary Terms: English-French-Arabic, Library of Lebanon, p. 315
[12] *Ibid*.p. 315
[13] *Ibid*.p. 315
[14] Leezenberg, M. (2001). *Contexts Of Metaphor*, Elsevier Science Ltd, p. 4
[15] *Ibid*.
[16] Robert A. Wilson & Frank C. Keil. *op.cit.*, p. 134
[17] Lakoff, G. (1987). *Women, Fire and Dangerous Things,* Chicago, University of Chicago Press.
[18] Fauconnier, G. (1985). *Mental Spaces.* Cambridge, MA, MIT Press, p. 73
[19] Fauconnier, Gilles and Turner, Mark (2002), *The Way We Think : Conceptual Blending and the Mind's Hidden Complexities*, New York, Basic Books
[20] Fauconnier, G. (1985). *Mental Spaces*. *op.cit*. p. 99

[21] Camus, Albert. *L'Étranger*. Paris, Gallimard, 1957 (coll. Folio, 1971)
[22] Sartre, Jean-Paul. *«* Explication de L'Étranger *»*. Situations I. Paris, Gallimard, 1947, pp. 96-97
[23] O'Donohoe, Benedict. « L'Étranger and The Messianic Myth, or Meursault Unmasked ». PhaenEx 2, n°1, spring/summer 2007, p.1
[24] *Ibid*.
[25] Sartre, Jean-Paul, *op.cit*., pp. 96-97
[26] *Ibid*.
[27] A cognitive reference is anything, property, event, or otherwise, that, when explicitly or implicitly included in a text, falls within the framework of a specific communicative act.

References

Arabic References

- ألبير كامو. الغريب.(1982/1402). المكتبة الثقافية
- ألبير كامو. الغريب. (1997/1418) ترجمة : د. محمد غطّاس. الدار المصرية اللبنانية
- مجدي وهبه (1974). معجم مصطلحات الأدب: إنكليزي ـ فرنسي ـ عربي، مكتبة لبنان.
- مجدي وهبه وكامل المهندس.(1984). معجم المصطلحات العربية في اللغة والأدب، مكتبة لبنان.

Other References

- Camus, Albert. *L'Étranger*. Paris, Gallimard, 1957 (coll. Folio, 1971)
- Fauconnier, G. (1985). *Mental Spaces.* Cambridge, MA, MIT Press
- Fauconnier, Gilles and Turner, Mark (2002), *The Way We Think : Conceptual Blending and the Mind's Hidden Complexities*, New York, Basic Books
- Lakoff, G. (1987). *Women, Fire and Dangerous Things,* Chicago, University of Chicago P
- Leezenberg, M. (2001). *Contexts Of Metaphor*, Elsevier Science Ltd
- Miller, G.A. (1951) *Language and Communication*, McGraw-Hill
- Miller, G.A. « The Cognitive Revolution : A Historical Perspective », *TRENDS in Cognitive Science,* vol. 7, n° 3, March 2003
- O'Donohoe, Benedict. « L'Étranger and The Messianic Myth, or Meursault Unmasked ». PhaenEx 2, n°1, spring/summer 2007
- Politis, M. (2007) « Introduction », *Meta*, vol. 52, n°1
- Politis, M. (2007) « L'apport de la psychologie cognitive à la didactique de la traduction », *Meta*, vol. 52, n°1
- Robert A. Wilson & Frank C. Keil. (1999) *The MIT Encyclopedia of the Cognitive Sciences*, Bradford Books
- Sartre, Jean-Paul. *«* Explication de L'Étranger *»*. Situations I. Paris, Gallimard, 1947