

UDC 811.131

**APPROXIMATION AND METAPHOR
 IN ITALIAN NOMINATIVE STRATEGY**

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S. Mercantini. Approximation and metaphor in Italian nominative strategy. This article analyses nominative strategies in the Italian language and deals with miscellaneous cases which cannot be described in terms of direct nomination. In particular, I consider approximation and metaphor as two complementary means used by the speaker to characterize the concept. Approximation and metaphor are semantic categories with a specific system of rules. According to their specific semantic properties, approximatives “stretch” the semantic field of a concept so that it can be applied to different situations, leading to a fuzzy description of the situation; metaphors, on the contrary, clearly identify some aspects of a fuzzy situation so that it can become more comprehensible for the listener. Both approximative and metaphorical operators are used for redefining a concept and for changing its range of applicability. In this article is given a definition of approximatives and metaphors and then a description of their semantic properties, including the pragmatic information they convey. I also give an original classification of approximatives, dividing them in two different groups – graduating and boundary approximatives. Both approximative and metaphorical operators allow speakers to convey their subjective relationship to the described situation: this article analyses the different kind of the speaker’s assessment on the base of the selected operator, approximative rather than metaphor. Approximative and metaphorical cases differ very much depending on the linguistic local culture: in Ukraine, English, Russian and Italian we have different systems of approximatives or metaphors and they convey different meanings. The article also provides a detailed illustration of the assessment process of metaphors related to *food* in Italian linguistic culture.

Keywords: approximation, approximative, assessment, Italian, metaphor, nomination.

С. Меркантині. Апроксимація і метафора в італійській номінативній стратегії. У даній статті аналізуються номінативні стратегії італійської мови і розглядаються різні випадки, які не можна описати прямими номінативними засобами. Зокрема, я розглядаю апроксимацію і метафору як два взаємодоповнюючих засоби, що використовуються мовцем для опису ситуації. Апроксимація і метафора – це семантичні категорії, що підпорядковуються певній системі правил. У відповідності до своїх специфічних семантичних властивостей апроксимативи “розширюють” семантичне поле концепту, щоб його можна було застосовувати до різних ситуацій, що призводить до нечіткого опису ситуації; метафори, навпаки, чітко ідентифікують певні аспекти нечіткої ситуації, щоб вона стала більш зрозумілою для співрозмовника. І апроксимативні, і метафоричні оператори використовуються для перевизначення концепту і зміни діапазону його застосованості. У цій статті дається визначення апроксимативів і метафор, а потім описуються їх семантичні властивості, включаючи прагматичну інформацію, яку вони передають. Я також надаю оригінальну класифікацію апроксимативів, розділяючи їх на дві різні групи – градууючі і граничні. І апроксимативні, і метафоричні оператори дозволяють мовцям передавати своє суб’єктивне ставлення до описуваної ситуації: в цій статті аналізується відмінність в оцінці ситуації мовцем залежно від обраного оператора, бо апроксимативні і метафоричні оператори передають різні оцінки. Функції та значення апроксимативів і метафор суттєво розрізняються залежно від локальної мовної культури. Друга частина статті містить докладні ілюстрації ходу аналізу метафор, пов’язаних з їжею, в італійській мовній культурі.

Ключові слова: апроксиматив, апроксимація, італійська мова, метафора, номінація, оцінка.

С. Меркантини. Аппроксимация и метафора в итальянской номинативной стратегии. В данной статье анализируются номинативные стратегии на итальянском языке и рассматриваются различные случаи, которые нельзя описать прямыми номинативными средствами. В частности, я рассматриваю аппроксимацию и метафору как два взаимодополняющих средства, используемых говорящим для описания ситуации. Аппроксимация и метафора – это семантические категории, подчиняющиеся определенной системой правил. В соответствии со своими специфическими семантическими свойствами аппроксимативы “растягивают” семантическое поле концепта, чтобы его можно было применять к различным ситуациям, что приводит к нечеткому описанию ситуации; метафоры, напротив, четко идентифицируют некоторые аспекты нечеткой ситуации, чтобы она стала более понятной для собеседника. И аппроксимативные, и метафорические операторы используются для переопределения концепта и изменения диапазона его применимости. В этой статье дается определение аппроксимативов и метафор, а затем описание их семантических свойств, включая прагматическую информацию, которую они передают. Я также даю оригинальную классификацию аппроксимативов, разделяя их на две разные группы – градуирующие и предельные. И аппроксимативные, и метафорические операторы позволяют говорящим передавать свои субъективные отношения к описанной ситуации: в этой статье анализируется отличие в оценке ситуации говорящим зависимо от выбранного оператора: аппроксимативные и метафорические операторы передают разные оценки. Функции и значения аппроксимативов и метафор существенно различаются в зависимости от местной языковой культуры. Вторая часть статьи содержит подробные иллюстрации хода анализа метафор, связанных с едой, в итальянской языковой культуре.

Ключевые слова: аппроксиматив, аппроксимация, итальянский язык, метафора, номинация, оценка.

1. Introduction

In one of his works, *Metaphors we live by*, George Lakoff [Lakoff 2003: 116] says: “Because so many of the concepts that are important to us are either abstract or not clearly delineated in our experience (the emotions, ideas, time, etc.), we need to get a grasp on them by means of other notions that we conceptualize by direct linguistic means (spatial orientations, objects, etc.)”.

According to the American linguist, communication is based on our experience and in our experience, there are many situations when we have some troubles in answering simple questions such as *what is it?* or *what are we talking about?*

If, for example, for lunch we are offered to try something new, for example, a Feijoa fruit, which we have never seen before, then we immediately want to know *what it is*, and if we are told that the fruit is called Feijoa, we will feel that they did not answer our question. While we will feel greater satisfaction with such a highly approximate definition: *Feijoa fruit has a strong smell, to taste – something between pineapple and strawberry* or *Feijoa Fruit is something like kiwi, it smells like green apple*.

The same difficulties occur when we deal with concepts that are more important for our life. For example, when we want to convey a kind of excitement associated with the fact that we are behind schedule, that the project was supposed to be finished by now, but we’re still working on it. If someone asks us *how are you?*, and we will answer with such expressions as “*Sono con l’acqua alla gola*” (*I’m so swamped! Literally: Water almost reached my throat*), “*Ho qui (sulla nuca si intende) una spada di Damocle*” (*this work hangs over me like the sword of Damocles*), then we will convey to our interlocutor the full range of our feelings – excitement, hope, a threatening situation, etc., much more directly, accurately and vividly than if we tried to explain our state by means of precise psychological terms.

In both situations, understanding some concepts in terms of other members of the same semantic category or in terms of other categories, better provides connection between human experience, concept and nomination: in the first example, the accuracy of the description is not sufficient to generate understanding, and we use another member of the fruit category more clearly distinguished in our experience; in the second example, images related to a physical experience of

the material world (sinking or being pierced with a sword) allow to clearly understand a complex psychological state.

Among all linguistic operators that allow us to combine our need for definition and our experience, I decided to analyze approximatives and metaphors. And I will try to show their complementary **semantic and pragmatic functions**.

In particular, in this paper I intend to solve two problems:

- draw the **boundaries between the semantic categories** of approximation and figurative nomination;

- to identify their **systematic (not random) properties** in redefining the situation in favor of more accurate assessment of the situation itself.

While the category of metaphor is widely researched in the scientific literature, the concept of approximation is studied mainly as part of other semantic categories (modality, uncertainty, intensity), and only in rare cases one can find works published on approximation as an independent category with its own semantic and functional properties. The terminology that I use does not have a common scientific base, for this reason I briefly illustrate the meaning of two key terms ‘approximation’ and ‘approximative’ in order to explain and justify my choice.

2. Theoretical background: definitions of ‘approximation’ and ‘approximative’

In this article, I use the term ‘approximative’ to any linguistic operator (such as *almost*, *nearly*, *about...*), through which the speaker assesses an incomplete correspondence of the nomination to the situation described. With the help of the approximative, the semantic category of approximation appears in the text. What I mean by the term ‘approximation’, can be illustrated with two examples:

- (1a) *Il campo era quasi asciutto* [Benni 2013: 141]. (*The football field had almost dried up*)
 (1b) *Dopo mezz'ora di lotta in mezzo al fango, <...> il campo era quasi asciutto. Allora la tecnica dei Finezza rifuse* [Benni 2013: 141]. (*After half an hour of brutal play in the mud, <...> the football field was almost dry. Then the players of team Finezza were able to show their wonderful technique*)
 (2) *All'interno di una specie di gazebo* [Augias 2005: 45]. (*Inside a kind of gazebo*).

The category of approximation implies a condition in which a person cannot relate the real object to any mental pattern. Then, to understand a situation (an object, state, property, action, or process), the subject of perception needs to compare object of perception with another familiar situation. He will compare either different degrees of one situation or two situations that have some common features.

In example (1a), the speaker establishes a comparison between **different degrees** of a single graduated drying process. He observes the state of the football field, which does not correspond either to the state of ‘being dry’, or to the state of ‘being wet’, but corresponds to a certain intermediate state that he cannot define, but which is, in his opinion, more dry rather than wet.

In example (2), there is another type of comparison – the speaker does not compare the different degrees of one graduated process, but two or more **different mental objects** and selects one object as the most similar to the one that is in front of him. In particular, in example (2), there’s the description of a building that is located in a garden and is adapted for people to rest and socialize in it. In this building there are seats and a table, but the speaker cannot precisely identify this kind of construction: it has simultaneously something in common with arbors, verandas, gazebos ... As a result of a mental comparison, the subject of perception chose the pattern ‘gazebos’, as having more common features with the observed building.

In Russian scientific literature on this topic, researchers often use the term ‘*приблизительность*’ (rough estimation) to denote the results of a mental comparison, when the speaker is unable or unwilling to establish an exact relationship between the real object and any

familiar pattern [Adamovich 2011; Dubovickaja 2014; Pristinskaja 2012]. By the term ‘*аппроксимация*’ (approximation) I mean the semantic category, with which the speaker builds a verbal description of such a vague estimation of the situation. I propose the following semantic interpretation for any kind of approximation: **approximative P = ‘may not be P, but close to P’**. This definition is suitable for examples (1a, 1b), since the field has not completely dried up, but its condition is closer to dry rather than to wet – so much so that the football team managed to play as good as if the field was dry.

This definition is also suitable for example (2), since the character sees a building similar to what is called a gazebo, but due to the lack of some typical signs of a gazebo, he is not wholly committed to such a name. According to the definition of Italian dictionaries, a *gazebo* is a garden pavilion of stone or wrought iron, often covered with climbing plants. In this case, the walls of the structure consist almost entirely of plants, and the speaker no longer perceives it as a typical gazebo. However, the speaker cannot find another name, which indicates how close the observed object is to the mental pattern of the gazebo.

In examples (1a, 1b), the comparison is based on the degree of intensity of the state, in examples (2) the comparison is based on the common features of two different objects. From this difference depends the choice of the approximative, which is always interrelated with the nature of the comparison. I call ‘**graduating approximatives**’ those approximatives, that indicate the degree of implementation of the norm and the following semantic interpretation applies to them: **graduating approximative P = ‘it is P to such a degree, which is not fully P’** (in sentence *the football field was almost dry* the speaker indicates that the field was dry to such a degree that he couldn’t consider fully dry). In Italian we have such graduating approximatives as: *abbastanza, piuttosto, molto, appena*, (*enough, rather, much, barely*) etc. I call ‘**boundary approximatives**’ those approximatives, that indicate the distance between two similar situations and the following semantic interpretation applies to them: **boundary approximatives P = ‘it is near to P, but it is not P’** (in sentence *inside a kind of gazebo* the speaker deals with something, which is not a typical gazebo, it’s something else). In Italian we have such boundary approximatives as: *quasi, a momenti, per poco non, una specie di* (*almost, kind of*) etc.

3. Distinctive semantic features of categories approximation and metaphor

Approximatives and metaphors imply an **assessment** of the speech act, i. e. in the act of approximative or figurative naming, the speaker expresses his position in relation to reality, to the message, to the addressee and to the situation of communication in general.

In different studies is given the description of two points of contact between these categories: first of all, both approximative and figurative nomination indicate an assessment of the name by speaker [Sakhno 1983: 57; Lakoff 2004: 25–27]; secondly, both kind of assessment are based on a comparison process. Therefore, approximatives and metaphors are often difficult to distinguish, especially when they are used in describing fuzzy situations. Linguistic operators may be formally the same, but they perform different functions, as the following examples show:

- (3) *Sono in uno stato pietoso. Completamente disidratata. Quasi morta di fame* [Palazzolo 2005: 24]. (*I’m in a pitiful state. Completely dehydrated. Almost starving*).
- (4) *Stamattina non ho fatto colazione. Sto quasi morendo di fame!* (*This morning I did not have my breakfast. I’m almost starving!*).
- (5) *Gli occhi stretti in una specie di smorfia* [Camilleri 1996: 47]. (*Eyes narrowed in a kind of grimace*).
- (6) *Anch’io mi metto a ballare, non sono capace, faccio una specie di satiro che saltella tutto intorno* [Benni 2002: 33]. (*I started dancing too, but I’m not good at dancing, I look like a kind of satyr that jumps around*).

In all examples (3–6), there is a fuzzy description of the situation, though can be pointed out important differences, first of all according to the intent of the speaker and secondly, according to the relationship between the two compared situations. These differences become the criteria for distinguishing approximation from metaphor.

When the speaker's intent is to stress, or even to exaggerate a situation, as in example (4), then he will use a metaphor. On the contrary, if the speaker compares two close states in order to indicate an intermediate and undetectable state, as in example (3), then he will use an approximative.

From the point of view of the relationship between the compared situations, if the comparison is based on relationships that usually do not exist in reality, then we should talk about metaphor. Whereas approximation occurs when comparison is based on plausible and possible relationships [Sahno 1983: 59]. In example (5) *una specie di smorfia* (a kind of grimace), *una specie di* introduces an approximation and indicates the speaker's doubt (whether it is a grimace, a smile, a smirk, etc.). On the contrary, in example (6) *una specie di satiro* (a kind of satyre), *una specie di* introduces a metaphor, since it points to a mythological figure and there is no doubt that this person is not a satyr.

So, the examples presented above allow us to distinguish the approximative from the figurative speech: in approximation usually comparison is based on experience (physical or mental); the figurative nomination is expressive, while the approximative nomination is descriptive.

However, it is often difficult to distinguish the approximation from the metaphor, especially when the assessment of the situation by the speaker is transmitted by the whole context of the sentence, and not by the language operator itself. The evaluative attitude of the speaker can be encoded directly in the language operator, and this case we will talk about the **pragmatic information of the operator**, or such an attitude will be associated with the whole context of the sentence, then we will talk about the **pragmatic information of the communicative situation**.

According to Yu.D. Apresyan we can speak about **pragmatic information of the operator** when “in the linguistic unit is fixed the attitude of the speaker 1) to reality, 2) to the content of the message, 3) to the addressee. I underline that this is not about an assessment that a speaker can freely make in a speech, but only about that lexicalized or grammaticalized assessment, which is embedded directly in the content of linguistic units, so that this assessment has a permanent status in the language” [Apresyan 1995: 136].

The difference between the assessments included in the communication situation or fixed in the linguistic unit will be illustrated by the following examples:

(7) *È rimasto un pezzettino di torta, chi lo vuole? (There is a little piece of cake left, who wants it?)*

The word *pezzettino* contains two diminutive suffixes, *-etto* and *-ino*, which mean a very small piece, i. e. the small size of the object is emphasized. The semantic description is: ‘a piece that in size to a great extent is much smaller than the average piece of a cake. The piece is so small that the speaker does not consider it even a piece’.

The opinion of the speaker, that a piece of this size should not be considered a piece, is contained in the reduplication of the diminutive suffix. The context of communication confirms the semantics of the suffix and adds another assessment of the speaker, i. e. his intention is that the listeners also consider this little piece “not a piece” and finish the cake. The pragmatic information about the *piece of cake* has a “permanent status” in the language, since it is a sense of the suffix. The pragmatic information about the final intent of the speaker (people eating this last piece of cake) is related to the semantics of the double suffix, however it does not have a “permanent status” in the language, because this information depends only on the context.

Pragmatic analyses of a linguistic operator allows to understand how approximatives and metaphors are similar and different at the same time:

- (8) “*Mi chiamo Tavernier, André Tavernier. Sono il proprietario di questa casettina*” [Faletti 2014: 312]. (*My name is Tavernier, André Tavernier. I'm the owner of this little house*).

In example (8), the semantics of the suffix is preserved, and the word *casettina*, used instead of the word *casa*, means such a small house that you should not call home. However, the speaker's intention towards the addressee is completely different from speaker's intention in example (7). In example (8), *little house* is called a big, rich villa, i. e. the suffix *-ettina* expresses the speaker's ironic attitude, and the addressee should interpret the name *casetta* in its opposite meaning: ‘a home that is larger in size than the average house’.

Obviously, the speaker's assessment in relation to the addressee is not a permanent component of the *-ettino* suffix: it does not manifest itself directly in all *P-ettino* situations, but only in this particular context. In this case, the approximative acquires metaphorical functions, and is often combined with sentences like *si fa per dire, metaforicamente parlando* (figuratively speaking).

According to the above-mentioned distinctions, it is evident, that the choice between approximative and figurative nominations follows definite rules that can be **ordered in a system**.

According to Lakoff, “Rather than being rigidly defined, concepts arising from our experience are open-ended. Metaphors and hedges [as he calls what we call approximatives] are systematic devices for further defining a concept and for changing its range of applicability” [Lakoff 2004: 156].

We consider here how approximative and figurative nomination can be defined as a system within the language system.

4. The assessment system of approximatives

On the basis of collected examples, it's clear that approximatives have a system from two point of view – from a formal point of view and from the point of view of the intent of the approximative.

From the point of view of form, one can notice that approximative can always modify the object itself or its attributes.

Object:

- (9) *Per sei settimane, per il fatto che trascurava la scuola, Lee fu poi messo in una specie di casa di correzione* [Biagi 1991: 41]. (*Lee was sent for a month and a half to a kind of correctional institution, because he was skipping school*).
- (10) *Un disagio inspiegabile, una specie di freddo che ti intirizziva le ossa* [Fallaci 2010: 173]. (*An unexplained discomfort, a kind of cold that numbed all my bones*).
- (11) *Ci sono personaggi che si sono imposti con la rissa televisiva, lanciando l'insulto in diretta, altri con l'abbigliamento strampalato, altri ancora (e siamo sempre nel cosiddetto campo della cultura) facendo della diversità una bandiera* [Biagi 1991: 11]. (*Some people try to attract attention by scandals on television, insulting people; others by bizarre clothing; others (I'm still talking about what happens among so-called cultural figures) by deliberately demonstrating their orientation*).

Object's attributes:

- (12) *Per essere un po' uguale al Seba credo che mi manchino alcune cose abbastanza fondamentali, ad esempio la cintura di pitone* [Mastrocola 2003: 70]. (*I think that I lack some rather essential things in order to become at least a little like Seba, for example, a snakeskin belt*).
- (13) *Jim quasi non sentì la risposta. Era già partito di corsa* [Faletti 2006: 165]. (*Jim barely heard the answer. He ran away already*).

Based on these and other examples (about 500), we saw that there are operators who perform their approximative function **only in combination with objects**: *chiamato / detto / cosiddetto*

[so-called], *qualcosa come un, una sorta di / una specie di* [something like a kind], *un certo* [some], *pseudo-* [pseudo], *and others*.

Other operators, instead, become approximative **only in combination with attributes**: *abbastanza*, *piuttosto* [enough, enough], *quasi* [almost], *-astro* [derogatory suffix], *praticamente* [in fact], and others.

It should, therefore, be noted that the set of approximative for objects and attributes is not free from the point of view of compatibility but is subject to system rules.

The set of approximatives is also not free from the point of view of the function that each approximative performs. For example, the permanent function of *abbastanza* is to indicate that a given property of an object is present in such a quantity that to a certain extent we could include in the description also the opposite property (*rather essential ± useless*); the permanent function of *cosiddetto* is to indicate situations that are valid only for some speakers, from whom the author wants to distance himself (*so-called cultural figures*, but for the author they are not people who represent culture).

To sum up, I claim that approximation systematically expands the boundaries of a semantic category in order to expand the conditions for using a concept.

On the one hand, the flexibility of these boundaries between expressed category (for example, *essential*) and the category assumed in the expression (*useless*) allows us to expand the field of descriptions, to the detriment of the accuracy of the description: I can describe more situations, but the object won't be never clearly focused.

On the other hand, the semantic analysis of approximatives shows that they can, with mathematical precision, convey various shades of approximation observed in reality. This fact explains the use of the term 'approximative' in the field of linguistics, which belongs to the field of mathematical sciences. Following A. Werzbitska, we believe that the semantic interpretation allows to find the precise meaning of the approximative: "Even 'vague', 'subjective' and 'fuzzy' words such as particles in general and 'approximatives' in particular, do have a meaning, and that this meaning can be stated" [Wierzbicka 1986: 612], i.e. approximatives contribute to a clear and precise understanding of the fuzzy boundaries of a situation.

In order to show how precise can be the description of 'vagueness' though approximatives, we will take two synonyms *abbastanza* и *piuttosto* (*sufficiently, fairly*).

The graduating approximatives *abbastanza* and *piuttosto*, indicate different degrees of implementation of the norm. They both indicate approximations to the small pole of a graduated situation, towards the small pole of the opposite situation. The sentences *abbastanza bene* and *piuttosto bene* can be represented in the scale of good / bad as follows.

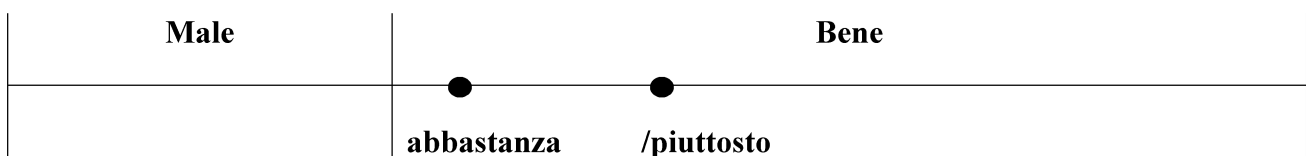


Figure 1. Representation of the graduating approximation *abbastanza* and *piuttosto*

The approximatives *abbastanza* and *piuttosto*, although they are synonyms and are translated in the same way in many languages, nevertheless, differently characterize the graduated properties of a situation and express two different attitudes of the speaker to the situation. In the case of the sentence *piuttosto bene*, the speaker perceives the situation as good and in no other way, he perceives the name *bene* as appropriate. On the contrary, the speaker perceives the name *bene* as dubious in the case of the sentence *abbastanza bene*. This difference can be illustrated by example from colloquial speech:

- (14) "Come va?" "Piuttosto bene" "Che ti è successo di bello?". ("How are you?" "Fairly good (literally, well enough)" "Do you have good news?").

The listener understands the answer *piuttosto bene* within the graduated state ‘well’, i. e. the intensity of the state with a plus sign does not change its essence, and it remains good, although, of course, not fully good. On the contrary, the state of *abbastanza bene* is understood as not quite good, and the reply “*Do you have good news?*” would be illogical here.

- (14a) “*Come va?*” “*Abbastanza bene*” “*Che ti è successo?*”. (“*How are you?*” “*so-so*” “*What happened?*”).

In example (14a), the approximative *abbastanza* contains the feature ‘intensity’ (with a minus sign), but also blurs the value of ‘good’. The name *bene* acquires a new semantic component ‘so well that it is not fully’, and the validity of such use in this context is called into question. This hypothesis is supported by contexts, where the expression *abbastanza bene* describes the emotional or physical condition of a person:

- (15) “*Come stai?*” “*Abbastanza bene. Devo aver preso una botta in testa*” [Ammaniti 1999: 172]. (“*How are you?*” “*So-so (literally, well enough). I think that someone hit me on the head*”).
- (16) “*Io la trovo abbastanza bene*” “*Appunto! Ieri sono stato dal medico e gli ho chiesto: “Dottore, mi dica la verità, potrò ancora stringere una donna tra le braccia?” “Certamente” ha risposto “se ne trova una disposta a farsi seppellire con lei”* [Benni 1990: 17]. (“*You look good*” “*Exactly! Yesterday I visited a doctor and asked him: ‘Doctor, tell me the truth: can I still embrace women?’ – ‘Of course, – he answered, – if you find the one who is ready to be buried with you’*”).

In examples (15–16), there are different kinds of limitations that lead to a relative understanding of the state “feeling good”. In example (15), *abbastanza bene* points out that situation could have been even worse than this; in example (16), the reply *Appunto!* reinforces the negative value of the approximative *abbastanza* and indicates that the speaker does not consider his state of health good, as it prevents him from leading a desired lifestyle. In this regard, an interesting example is the sentence:

- (17) *Tirava avanti abbastanza bene* [Guareschi 2003]. (*He kept on living not too bad*).

The steady expression *tirare avanti* replaces the neutral verb *stare* (*stare bene*) and contains two meanings: ‘not bad’ and ‘not good’. The same values are contained in the expression *abbastanza bene*, which does not add any new information here. The phrase *tirava avanti* differs from the phrase *tirava avanti abbastanza bene* not in terms of semantics, but in terms of expressiveness.

5. The assessment system of metaphors

If the approximation stretches the boundaries of meanings so that one concept can be applied to different situations, leading to a blurring of concepts, then the metaphor, on the contrary, clearly identifies some aspects of the situation so that the situation itself becomes more accessible.

Arutjunova says: “A metaphor identifies an object, relating it to a class it does not belong to.” [Arutjunova 1999: 348]. Through metaphorization, the concept “easily jumps over categorial barriers” [Arutjunova 1999: 346], in order to describe as accurately as possible all its “facets” (Arutjunova 1999: 388).

In figure 2, the source and target configuration of the concept AMORE is presented:

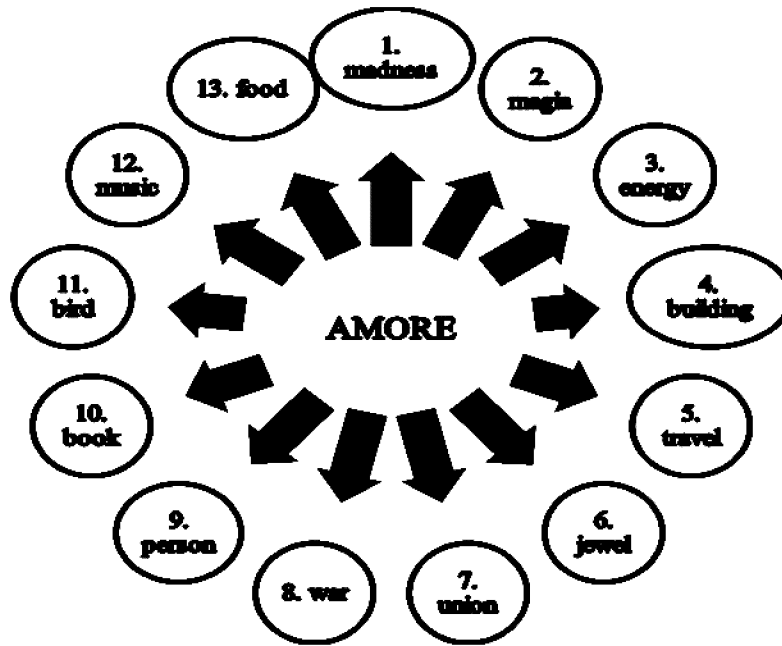


Figure 2. Cognitive metaphor AMORE IS SMTH

1. MADNESS: *perdere la testa, essere pazzo di qualcuno (lose one's mind)*;
2. WITCHCRAFT: *lei mi ha stregato (she bewitched me)*;
3. PHYSICAL ENERGY: *sono attratto da lei (she attracts me), non è scoccata la scintilla [spark of love]*;
4. A BUILDING: *il loro amore è indistruttibile (their love is indestructible), il loro rapporto è basato/fondato sull'amore (their relationship is based on love), i loro rapporti si sono incrinati [their relationship has cracked]*;
5. A TRAVEL: *il nostro rapporto è a un binario morto [our relationship is at a dead-end track], le nostre strade si dividono [our paths divide]*;
6. A JEWEL: *nozze d'argento [silver wedding], d'oro [gold], di diamante [diamond], Tesoro! [My treasure!] Caro! [dear]*;
7. UNION: *mettersi insieme [to get together], condividere un progetto di vita [share a life project]*;
8. WAR: *ha lottato per conquistare il suo amore [he fought to conquer her love]; lui le ha dichiarato il suo amore [he declared her his love], l'amore mercenario [mercenary love]*;
9. A PERSON: *è nato un amore [a love is born], questo amore è malato [our love is ill], l'amore è cieco [love is blind], il loro matrimonio è morto [their marriage is dead]*;
10. A BOOK: *vivere una storia d'amore [live a love story], chiudere una storia importante [close a love story]*;
11. A BIRD: *convolare a giuste nozze [to tie the knot – to fly to the wedding]*;
12. MUSIC: *vivere in armonia [live in harmony], essere in sintonia [to be in tune]*;
13. FOOD: *nutre del sincero amore per lei [he feels [feed] a true love], andare in luna di miele [honey moon], è cotto di lei [he's crazy [cook] for her], nel nostro rapporto manca del pepe [our relationship has no passion [has no pepper] anymore]*.

Through these images, we can quickly and often subconsciously understand the deep properties of AMORE that would be very difficult in describe. In *convolare a giuste nozze* [to tie the knot – to fly to the wedding], the image of the FLIGHT synthesizes many aspects of the concept of AMORE: AMORE is HAPPINESS (through another image, according to which happiness is an easy essence, and suffering is a burden), AMORE is MOVEMENT, COOPERATION (CON-), has A DIRECTION ...

In *hanno costruito una famiglia solida* [they built a solid family] the image of the BUILDING tells us that AMORE is WORK, SWEAT, EVOLUTION, STABILITY, BALANCE, ORDER ...

As for the possibilities of metaphorization, Arutjunova says: “The richer is the metaphoric structure of a feeling is, the wider and various is set of predicates serving its name” [Arutjunova 1999: 389]. However, we see that the set of compatible predicates is not free, but it is subject to system rules. We can say *perdere la testa per qualcuno*, but we cannot use any other synonyms, such as *smarrire* instead of *perdere*. Moreover, we cannot say *rimetterci la testa*, because we would build a new metaphor [to pay with your head]. We can also say *affamati d’amore* [love hunger], but not *affamati di verità* (*assetati di verità* [thirst for truth]).

So, the metaphorization of concepts tends to create a system that we cannot freely change.

One can also observe this system in the way metaphors combine and create a kind of complex structure in which we often do not notice the metaphorical shift. Metaphors can be combined as in the following example:

- (18) *A questo punto (L’AMORE è UN VIAGGIO) non ha più senso continuare la nostra storia (L’AMORE è UN FILM / LIBRO) (Here (AMORE is A JOURNEY) it has no longer any sense to continue our story (AMORE is A MOVIE / BOOK)).*

One can also expand on the metonymic principle: LOVE IS A JOURNEY → in the journey you can get into an accident, and this is reflected in such examples as:

- (19) *Dopo 20 anni di matrimonio, ha preso una sbandata per la segretaria (After 20 years of marriage, he got a lover). Literally: he had accident for another woman; having a lover is like getting into an accident on the way.*

As Lakoff [2003] puts it, “In allowing us to focus on one aspect of a concept (e. g., the battling aspects of arguing), a metaphorical concept can keep us from focusing on other aspects of the concept that are inconsistent with that metaphor” [2003: 9].

The system of our concepts is closely connected with the experience of a certain people, and this is clearly reflected in the choice, among all the objects of our perception, objects that will serve as a metaphor in everyday speech.

Therefore, in conclusion, we want to briefly illustrate the important role of the concept IL CIBO [food], in the metaphorical system of the Italian language. With the help of food, in Italian it is possible to describe many different situations.

6. FOOD in Italian cognitive metaphors

Let’s start with the word PANE, one of the main foods of the Mediterranean tradition.

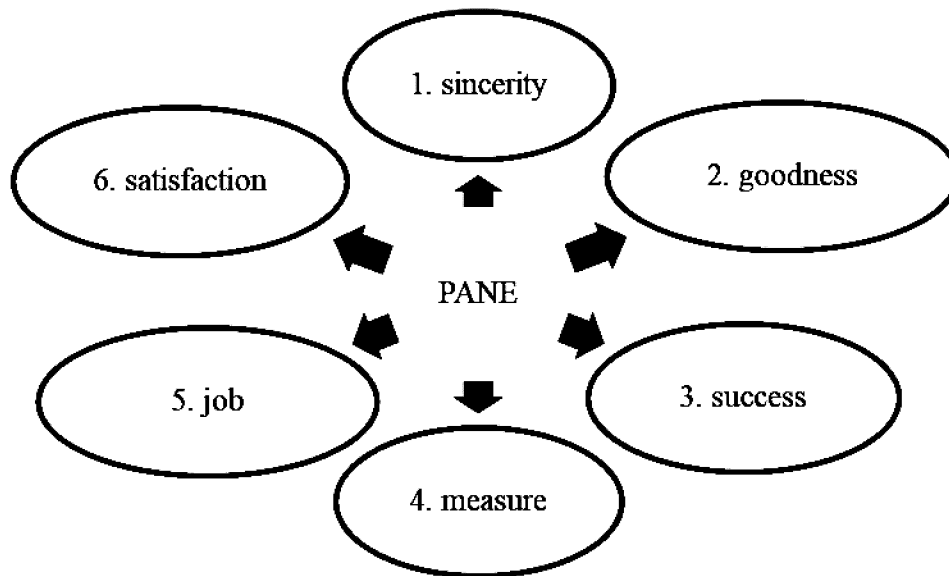


Figure 3. Cognitive metaphors BREAD IS SMTH

In figure 3, the cognitive metaphors of PANE are profiled against these six domains:

1. PANE is SINCERITY:

Dire pane al pane e vino al vino (to call bread bread and wine wine // to call a spade a spade).

2. PANE is GOODNESS:

Essere buono come il pane (to be good as bread // to be a good person).

Essere una pasta d'uomo (to be as good as good as dough).

3. PANE is SUCCESS:

Si vende come il pane (They sell it as bread).

4. PANE is MEASURE UNIT:

Rendere pan per focaccia (to pay bread with focaccia, that means pay with the same coin).

Non avere un briciolo di pudore/speranza etc. (Do not have a crum // modicum of modesty / hope etc.).

5. PANE is JOB AND SACRIFICE:

Mangia pane a ufo (being a parasite).

Mi tolgo il pane di bocca per te (I take my bread out of your mouth for you).

6. PANE is SATISFACTION:

La filologia è il suo pane (philology is his bread, that means philology is the subject he loves and knows best).

Accontentarsi delle briciole (Be content with crumbs).

In the works of modern authors, I have identified examples where one can see how various forms of experience are conceptualized in terms of FOOD.

With the help of FOOD, we define our mutual relations – COMMUNICATION is FOOD:

(20) *Si saziarono della compagnia reciproca, della compagnia delle cose piccole e grandi che capitavano [D'Avenia 2013: 54]. (They felt full satiation in each other's company, in the company of small and big things that happened).*

(21) *Esistono [...] politicanti [...] lesti [...] a cibarsi dell'altrui dolore (eat someone else's grief // get energy from someone else's grief), vuoi per pura malvagità d'anima vuoi per trarne politico profitto [Camilleri 2018: 75]. (There are politicians ready to feed themselves of the others' pain, either for pure evil or for political profit).*

We talk about our greed, describe our feelings – FEELINGS are FOOD:

- (22) *Quei soldi venivano inghiottiti dalle tasche (pockets ingest money) voraci (pockets ingest money with greed) della signora Elvira, ma almeno sperimentava la sottile e dolce gioia (joy is sweet) di un lavoro capace di nutrire non solo il corpo ma anche lo spirito (we feed our body and our spirit), proprio e delle giovani, inesperte, aride menti che gli erano affidate. [D’Avenia 2013: 123]. (That money was swallowed up by Mrs. Elvira’s voracious pockets, but at least he could feel the purest sweet joy, because he had a job that could nourish not only the body but also the spirit, her own and of the young, inexperienced, arid minds entrusted to him).*

We divide people into real and unreal – PEOPLE are FOOD:

- (23) *Dal canto suo, Alfonso in quell’epoca si trovava molto bene con Lucia; non aveva trovato nessuno che supplisse a Maria e Lucia gli serviva di surrogato [Svevo 1989: 102]. (For his part, Alfonso at that time was very comfortable with Lucia; he had not found anyone to substitute Maria, but Lucia was for him a good surrogate).*

In Italian culture, food is often idealized as this is a video on the 15th anniversary of the Italian advertisement about Lavazza coffee, which takes place in Paradise [<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1sBmU3zbJnQ>]. It serves an example of how important certain foods are in Italian culture and language, and how they contribute to the presentation of intangible phenomena, such as: happiness, good feelings, hospitality, Italian character, right up to heavenly experience.

7. Conclusion

In this article, I have analyzed two elements of fuzzy communication: approximatives and metaphors. Their linguistic properties are understudied in Italian scientific literature. Nonetheless I believe that such studies are very useful for mutual comprehension between people of the same culture, but even more useful for mutual comprehension between people of different linguistic cultures.

In a previous research [Mercantini 2016], I gave a deep analysis of the Italian approximatives, I described their properties and functions, but also I defined the semantic field of approximation in relation with other similar semantic categories related to nominative strategies, such as metaphor, indeterminacy, modality, intensity, metalanguage, heteronomination. In this article, I’ve pointed out differences and similarities between metaphor and approximation:

- approximative and metaphorical operators are used for redefining a concept and for changing its range of applicability;
- approximatives and metaphors imply an **assessment** of the speech act, i. e. in the act of approximative or figurative naming, the speaker expresses his position in relation to reality, to the message, to the addressee and to the situation of communication in general;
- semantic field of approximatives and metaphors is given on the basis of their communicative functions;
- approximative and metaphorical operators are subject to system rules from the point of view of combination with other parts of speech and from the point of view of the function they perform;
- approximative and metaphorical systems belong to a specific linguistic culture and they are often untranslatable into another language because of their cultural associations.

These results will hopefully be useful for further analysis into the above-mentioned semantic categories in order to have a complete description of Italian approach to nominative strategies and a deeper comprehension of Italian texts and culture.

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