Dance as Dialogue: Metaphorical Conceptualization and Semantic Domains

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1. Interpersonal attunement and turn-taking interaction:
Introductory remarks on music and language

La iglesia dice: el cuerpo es una culpa.
La ciencia dice: el cuerpo es una máquina.
La publicidad dice: el cuerpo es un negocio.
El cuerpo dice: yo soy una fiesta.
Eduardo Galeano.

In the first functional stage of human communication, before transactions with objects are developed beyond a few simple orientating reactions and thoughtless explorations, the infant recognises the mother and invites her to share a dance of expressions and excitements. The infant needs a partner but knows the principle of the dance well enough, and is not just a puppet to be animated by a miming mother who “pretends” her baby knows better.

Colwyn Trevarthen (1979).

Preceding musical ability and preceding mastery of language, the ontogenetic development of communicative behavior begins with attempts initiated by the infant to align its body and consciousness with other minds — a feat that quintessentially relies on a phenomenologically shared *temporal* perception
unique to our species\(^1\) and the interpersonal synchronization of *time* required for cooperative awareness. The vocally and gesturally implemented “dance” shared by infant and caretaker in prelinguistic communication (“a dance of expressions and excitements” as described by Trevarthen in the introductory quote) occurs as a prelude to referential and ostensive (e.g. by digital pointing: “Look, a bird!”) gesture-and-speech-based conversation. The fundamentally *rhythmic* turn-taking dance of expressions is, in the words of Trevarthen (p.c.), “conducted” by the infant (as evidenced in his video recordings) who will typically get impatient with a hesitant partner and gesturally remind them to get back in the groove.

Though music is by nature less referential than language, music and language thus evolve from a common cognitive and bodily foundation of intersubjectivity and interpersonal attunement as prerequisite conditions for temporal coordination and expressivity. It is not surprising, then, that music and language share a lot of vocabulary, the very concept of *attunement* being a case in point; though originating in the domain of music, the word is applied more widely and has a psychological meaning. Interpersonal attunement is part and parcel of all coordinated communicative social behavior, including musical and verbal interaction. In the same vein, “phrasing” is common to both music and language, and, as any skilled jazz musician knows, a musical phrase need to be played as a sort of “utterance”; the musician needs to “say” something, and mean it, lest the stream of notes turn into a torrent of gibberish. (Mistaking lalomania for eloquence is perhaps a folly of the misguided performer-Ego, seeking to impress, at the expense of meaningful “discourse”.)

 Analogies likewise exist between rhythmic features of linguistic and musical units, such as between the musical *beat* and metric *feet* in poetry, *i.e.* in versified language, defined by the linebreak. The break separating lines into bounded units can be compared to *bars* in music. The metrical foot, then, corresponds to a *beat* in a bar.

The experience of rhythm in metered verse relies on a two-fold pattern of accentuation: the meter, which is perceived as “the beat”, and the syllabic actualization which is inherently linguistic. A way of conceptualizing the relation between the two patterns is to see the articulated rhythm of speech as the apparent and salient form that is supported by the underlying meter. This image-schematic conceptualization (along a vertical axis) reinforces the impression that the linguistic rhythm is perceived directly, through the senses, whereas the *underlying beat* is perceived in a way that does not at all times require materialization; its presence is felt even when it cannot be seen or heard. This conceptual placement of two concurrent patterns along a vertical axis allows us to speak of metric form as the beat “underlying” the linguistically

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manifested stress pattern (the “speech form”). One is understood (i.e. perceived musically) in relation to the other, in mutual dynamic reciprocity. In L. Brandt (2013b), the experienced rhythmic structure emerging in the dynamic relation between the two is neologistically characterized as the emergent rhythm. “[T]he versification pattern […] corresponds to the underlying metric beat, the linguistic pattern to articulated rhythm, and performance corresponds to the emergent rhythm.” (ibid. p. 572).

The articulated rhythm can follow the pattern of the underlying meter, or it can deviate from it. When the two patterns converge, the syllabic instantiation is in exact accordance with the meter. When the two patterns diverge, we get a Jakobsonian “contrapuntal” effect (Jakobson 1960: 366). Pursuing the analogy to music, we can compare the threefold structure of poetic rhythm to the structure of percussive rhythm which appears to be threefold as well. There is the time signature and there is the executed pattern of accentuation in the implementation of the time signature. The time signature is the underlying formal constraint which guides the acoustic actualization. Or, following Jakobson (in his characterization of poetry), we could say that the meter signature superinduces an equivalence principle upon the sound sequence. The time signature in music thus corresponds to the meter, and the articulated rhythm corresponds to the drummer’s realization of the beat in actual percussive impact.

One significant difference between language and music concerns meaning. Language and music can of course be combined, as in song (which has lyrics to be sung), but the meaning of music in and of itself, as experienced by those who play it and those who listen, is not ostensive and referential in the same sense as utterances or sentences are. Rather, the meaning of music, I would argue, is directly tied to bodily experiences; the meaning of music is movement. Music, thus conceived, communicates bodily sentiments, emotions and moods (the latter is, for instance, tied to speed; a funereal mood is best set by a slow and deliberate rather than frantic pace), as well as schematic (and bodily experienced) meanings such as “ascension” (cf. Coltrane’s composition by the same name), and “dance” in its widest sense, including non-choreographed expressive movements like finger-tapping, swaying, head-bobbing. Hence, the “meaning” of dance moves (at a basic, non-narrative level) is, essentially, emotive and schematic (for instance, along gradient axes: intensity, size, up-down, low-high, light-dark, close to the surface-deep, open-closed, heavy-light, etc.) — as reflected in the way we spontaneously talk about music and dance.

If we look at the structural contents of dance as a domain of experience, it is interesting how we conceptualize — and hence talk about — it, not least metaphorically, borrowing ways of thinking about it from other domains — and reversely how dance can provide a conceptual frame for talking about things that are

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only metaphorically dance-related. The aim in this paper is to tie these dimensions together — communication, dance and music — and explore their interrelation, by applying Semantic Domains Theory to dialogue metaphors for dance.

Through this novel methodology and by applying the notion of semantic domains to concrete examples of empirical language use, I seek to present a convincing argument for the crucial significance of rhythm, common to music and language, both in markedly rhythmic dialogue-behavior (apparent as a parameter even in prelinguistic infant behavior), as well as in musical prosody and the prosody of linguistic utterances. Furthermore, a central emphasis in what follows is an, I claim, prominent and important aspect to having a body, which is often overlooked or trivialized in cognitive linguistics (as discussed below), namely the social one. An informed appreciation of our non-isolated, non-self-reliant way of being in the world in turn warrants a reevaluation of the cognitive-linguistic concept of the “embodied” mind.3

The human body, in a semiotic perspective, is not just a container letting fluids in and out and navigating in space; it is a social and communicative body, adorning itself with ornamental signifiers signaling (e.g. ethnic) affiliation. It is a rhythmic body that engages in literary practices and in dancing — in synchrony with and reaction to other bodies. A semiotic notion of embodiment [...] hence implies the incorporation (literally) of the gaze of the Other. (L. Brandt 2013b: 25)

2. Linguistic metaphor, conceptual metaphor, and domains

In its initial phases of theoretical evolution, cognitive-linguistic theories of embodiment conceived of the human body as a solitary, physical object confined to self-reliant practices of metabolizing nourishment and moving around in its physical environment. By contrast, our present theoretical foundation for philosophical and semantic analysis integrates into the concept of a human body a social as well as semiotic dimension of existence; intersubjectivity and expressivity are essential and unavoidable aspects of having a body, and we are, in a sense, born into a world of “dance partners” who are an intricate part of our natural ‘environment’. In addition to its physiological configuration and bio-mechanical organization, a body is thus also a body in relation to other bodies and minds. A body’s natural environment is a platform, a “stage”, for social interaction, verbal and otherwise.

The body, as a vehicle of expression, can indulge in dance with a singular partner, with a multitude of dance partners, or can dance solo in front of an (imagined or actual) external gaze. The dance will mean different things in different contexts and depending on these contextual meanings will attract different metaphors — as linguistic descriptions and as conceptual frames of understanding.

3. View e.g. Lakoff & Johnson (1980, 1999).
Silent she dances like a burning building forward and down; many stories
difficult to count as they collapse.

The simile in this line by American poet Thalia Field, from her lyrical
“performance novel” Ululu (Clown Shrapnel), likens a dancer’s movement forward
and down to the movement of a burning building: a high-rise, on fire, reaching
a threshold of stress and subsequently collapsing. The metaphoric merger in the
final clause of body and building captures the appearance of the movement of
the dancing body, highlighting her shape-shifting body as it transforms from an
upright position into a collapse, as an object of observation seen from afar.

In the following, we will focus, not on the solo dancer, but on movement
in relation to other bodies, examining metaphoric conceptualizations of dance
evoking the easily accessed conceptual frame of verbal face-to-face interaction,
that is, the conversation frame, as we know it from the domain of communication.
G. Lakof and M. Johnson (1980) described conceptual metaphor as understanding
one thing (the target) in terms of something else of a different kind (the source),
and in some cases (though not all) it is a structural similarity between the two
ranges of experience that allows one to find coherence in the range of highlighted
experiences of the target domain. That would be the case, for instance, in the
ARGUMENT IS WAR metaphor discussed in Metaphors We Live By (giving
rise to metaphors like “a battle of wits”), which highlights opposition and
rivalry, and the ARGUMENT IS DANCE metaphor suggested as an alternative
highlighting the aspect of cooperation. The activity of arguing is a subgenre of
verbal interaction, and as such, the latter conceptual metaphor has the reverse
source and target directionality of the conceptual metaphor under consideration
here, namely DANCE IS DIALOGUE. In the individual metaphors engendered by
this conceptual metaphor, bringing together these two “ranges of experience” in
a metaphoric sign (a non-actual identification), the communicative expressivity
of conversation is brought to bear on an activity which is non-verbal but which
likewise relies on temporal attunement between interacting parties and on
establishing a turn-taking rhythm.

In a paper tracing the origin of mathematical numbers to the cyclic (numeric)
structure of a musical beat, P.A. Brandt (2012) examines the multi-cyclical temporal
structure of music and dance, pointing to the “primordial intersubjectivity as
participative temporal togetherness”:

A beat is of course invisible. It is very often also inaudible. Nevertheless
it exists, it is there, the musician or the dancer will feel and mark it by a secret
proprioceptive muscular move; and it can be counted aloud using its name, as
often occurs when a piece begins, and the participants seek to be “on the same
beat.” Cardinal numerals — one, two… — are such names of beats. Other
cultures have other, more complicated names for beats; but all are learned as
finite series, following a decimal, vigesimal, duodecimal or otherwise simple and
short cycle in other cycles. / The current cognitive dogma that space determines
all domains of meaning is not helpful here. Temporal symbolization is not
tridimensional, and its mental visibility is sui generis: a measure or a sequence
of measures can form a tonal space in the sense of an imaginary place, where a
tonal phrase can unfold and even allow verbal events to take place. However, the
imaginary place where this happens has no gravitation, the body of the subject is
not represented, it has no colors (except for synesthetes […] ) and even no stable
scale of objects. But it still has numericity! It is entirely immaterial, in this sense,
and it is experienced by humans as being shared. This temporal phenomenon
of experienced sharedness is probably the elementary form of communication,
an emotional continuity between subjects, thus: a primordial intersubjectivity
as participative temporal togetherness, as expressed by the socially constitutive
first-person pronoun we. *We are on the same beat…* (Brandt 2012: 19-20)

Taking into account C. Trevarthen’s observations of dance-like proto-
conversation between infant and caretaker (cf. the introductory quote), dance
and dialogue appear to be compatible for the reason that, as stated in Brandt’s
text above, this “temporal phenomenon of experienced sharedness is probably
the elementary form of communication”. A particular *dance* (e.g. salsa or tango)
can consequently, according to this dance-as-dialogue conceptual metaphor, be
thought of as a “language” in which dancers can “converse”, as illustrated by this
description from a dance studio webpage: “Think of salsa as a language and dance
as a *conversation* between two people. You must both *speak* the same *language*
in order to dance together. That’s what we do at the studio. We teach you the
common *language of the dance*, so that you can go out to social meetings and
dance with everyone.”⁴ (emphasis added) When, after all, the dance in question is
not literally a language, it is because of a domain difference; the source (dance) and
the target (dialogue) belong to two different “ranges of experience”, two different
“domains”; they are “two different kinds of things” (Lakoff & Johnson 1980).⁵

What this means exactly has not been investigated in any systematic way by either
the authors of *Metaphors We Live By* or in subsequent research further developing
the framework presented. The question of *domain difference* is thus deserving of
some attention.

### 3. Source and target domains in dance-as-dialogue metaphors

The interpretation of the conceptual metaphor *DANCE IS DIALOGUE* as
involving “two different kinds of things” in terms of domain differences requires a
coherent account of *domains*, from which to derive the difference.

The notion of semantic domains was introduced in E. Sweetser (1990), in
which the author suggests a division into a root domain of social and physical

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⁴ [http://www.cruzdancestudio.com/#!lessons/c1t44](http://www.cruzdancestudio.com/#!lessons/c1t44) [this and subsequent links accessed March 2015].

⁵ For a critique of the notion of *domains* in cognitive linguistics, see L. Brandt (2013a).
reality and two additional domains of reasoning and speech acts, yielding a total of three semantic domains. These domains are derived from diachronic linguistic evidence; the analysis of modality (inspired by previous work by Leonard Talmy), causality, conjunction, and conditionality give indication as to what underlying domains exist, and these domains, grounded in human cognition, are consequently hypothesized to be the foundation for the “metaphorical mappings” investigated. A metaphorical mapping from an external, sociophysical semantic domain to an internal, mental, and epistemic semantic domain, for instance, explains the distinct senses of shared topological structure (here: force-and-barrier schemas) in root and epistemic modality, respectively. 6 The so-called speech-act domain is of special interest in the context of our dance-as-dialogue metaphor since it encompasses forms of verbal (and gestural) face-to-face interaction (in Sweetser’s work, most notably meta-linguistic negotiation and speech acts) and hence communicative settings in which the conversation frame is activated. Semantic domains, by contrast to so-called experiential domains (Lakoff & Johnson 1980), are finite in number, and the conversation frame thus originates in one of very few available semantic domains.

Following his review (cf. Brandt 1996) of Sweetser (1990), P.A. Brandt subsequently elaborated on Sweetser’s idea and further evolved a theory of “the architecture of semantic domains”, published in P.A. Brandt (2004). This theory, in turn, was employed in a paper on fictive interaction (cf. Pascual 2002) by T. Oakley (2014). The theory posits a division of our experiential lifeworld into four basic domains of intentional intersubjective coordination which combine into four tiers of more abstract “satellite domains”. The four basic domains are equivalent rather than hierarchically organized, and this first tier of human experience comprise a physical domain (D1), a social domain (D2), a mental domain (D3) specifying “that which can be attributed to human thinking and reasoning” (Oakley 2014), and a communicational domain (D4) that “issues from empathy and co-operative communication” (ibid.): in effect, this is a domain of utterances (Oakley 2014: 339). These four basic domains are, according to P.A. Brandt, gesture-based and motoric (hence also rhythmic):

- Domain 1 – physical locomotion (walking, running)
- Domain 2 – social coordination (shared bodily routines)
- Domain 3 – mental coordination (sharing of attention by eye or skin contact)
- Domain 4 – symbolic coordination (turn-taking, gestures)7

Though particular languages, cultures and individuals may fill them differently to some extent, these basic domains are neither language-dependent nor culture-

6. “My idea is […] that our experience of these domains shares a limited amount of common structure, which is what allows a successful metaphorical mapping between the relevant aspects of the three domains.” (Sweetser 1990: 59)

dependent but qualify as universally given semantic domains (P.A. Brandt 2004). They are, in the words of T. Oakley, a “pre-ontological set of four domains”, or, to put it differently: cognitively ontological semantic domains.8

By contrast to a view according to which D1 is taken to be the constitutional ground for other domains (cf. e.g. the position in Sweetser 1990, implicit also in the tradition of Lakof & Johnson 1980), communicative interaction is here suggested to be a basic semantic domain in human cognition, on a par with the physical one (as well as the social and mental ones).9 That conversation be basic to human experience is a supposition that challenges the prevailing physicalist paradigm in cognitive linguistics. However, present-day conceptual metaphor theory, as the latest work by Z. Kövecses would indicate, seems to be coming around to the fact that cognition, including metaphorical cognition, is grounded in experience in multiple ways,

not only the [physical] body, but also in the situations in which people act and lead their lives, the discourses in which they are engaged at any time in communicating and interacting with each other, and the conceptual knowledge they have accumulated about the world in the course of their experience of it. (Kövecses 2015: 200)

The higher-order domains of experience constituting the next four tiers of domains are generated by consolidating the basic motoric domains, by binary compositions of the three external ones (i.e. excluding D3). While the first tier of domains is bodily grounded in gesture and gesturally realized interactions with the surroundings, the next four tiers are increasingly removed from the body and in this sense increasingly abstract. The first tier of satellite domains pertains to acts, the second values, the third one discourse, and finally, the fourth one comprises genres of knowledge.10 As concerns metaphor, the idea is that metaphors create virtual connections between different domains, both within and across tiers of domains, and in both directions. For our purposes, we will focus on first level satellites, the level of acts, to categorize the target (dance) in the conceptual metaphor under consideration. D5, a consolidation of D1 and D2, is the domain of work, products, of inhabited territory, a polity (Greek: polis); marching in synchrony in parades wearing theatrical costumes would be an example of a D5 activity. D6 combines D2 and D4 and is the domain of ethnic and domestic identity (Greek: oikos) and hence also of romance. D7, combining D1 and D4, concerns matters of divine worship and ritual: religious acts and feelings (Greek: hieron). Participative

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8. In L. Brandt (2008), the author refers to the domain of verbal interaction (D4) as an ontological domain of communication.
9. With its placement of communication and the conversation frame in a larger linguistic and philosophical context, this perspective is supported by the findings in L. Brandt (2010, 2013b).
experiences of ritual behaviors of all sorts belong to this domain: games, sports, and ludic behaviors celebrating the intervention of contingent and fatal forces. Inter-body coordination in work, love and worship, the three universal and elementary categories of social activity, as suggested in Brandt’s theory of the origin of number, is universally based on counting, singing, and dancing (P.A. Brandt 2012).

Domain 5 – Work (composition of D1 and D2: physical and social).
Domain 6 – Love (composition of D2 and D4: social and symbolic).
Domain 7 – Worship (composition of D1 and D4: physical and symbolic).

Dance as such cannot in advance be said to belong to any one domain; we need to look at specific kinds of dance to determine which domain is activated. For example, just as artful pottery is distinguished from art that is purely aesthetic and has no practical purpose, so too can dance as an artform (performed on stage) be distinguished from dance occurring in specific types of situations (e.g. ceremonies of initiation). Given these distinctions, yet further differences can be observed, as regards the dance as well as the accompanying music (compare e.g. a victory dance versus a wedding waltz). A good example of dance as an artform would be the ballet, which is hence a D9 dance type. D9, a consolidation of D6 and D7, is the aesthetic domain, according to Brandt’s theory of semantic domains (P.A. Brandt 2004). Thalia Field’s burning-building dancer also appears to be engaging in a D9 activity; she is on stage, performing, or is dancing in ecstasy without any audience other than the narrator who observes her from an exterior vantage point as her body changes shape and position. A dance such as the tango, on the other hand, is a romantic dance and thus tango-as-dialogue metaphors activate the domain of domestic affiliation and love, D6, as the target domain.

4. Tango: a romantic dialogue

Love is TANGO and TANGO is love! Yes, it is a dance, yet so much more than just any dance. It is an ongoing conversation between two souls, two hearts and two bodies. It is a sacred dance we enter in with one another, where both ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine’ feel fully expressed and honored.
Ilona Glinarsky.

One type of dance that attracts a lot of dialogue metaphors is, perhaps not surprisingly, the tango:

[...] Tango is a walking embrace. It is a corporeal dialogue that is intimate and sensual, danced to nostalgic music. Born from foreigners who could not return to
their homeland, they compensated for this with an embrace that communicated longing and sensuality through its walked movement.\(^{11}\) (emphasis added)

In and of itself (\textit{i.e.} non-metaphorically), tango has been described as “perfect communication without dialogue”\(^{12}\), between a man and a woman. The communication that occurs between the dancers is both subtle and dramatic and is characterized by connoisseurs as intensely physical as well as emotional. Metaphorically, what typically emerges is the experience of an “intimate dialogue”: Tango is deeply relational and social at its very core: it was born from the need to make contact with the other, to communicate emotionally and physically, to improvise together and move in unison within an \textit{intimate dialogue}.”\(^{13}\) (emphasis added) The intimacy can be experienced as \textit{erotic}: cf. the title of the book \textit{Tango-Conversation. Erotic dialogues in dance}.\(^{14}\) The metaphorical “dialogue” unfolding in the dance is in any case profoundly \textit{emotional}, given the direct involvement of the dancers’ bodies continuously acting and reacting together: “Tango is a complex art form which involves a sustained, \textit{emotional dialogue} with another, communicated through the embrace and embodied in a choreographed walk which can be accented with leg entwinements, kicks, turns and rapid footwork.”\(^{15}\) (emphasis added)

While communication in the source domain happens mainly through an exchange of linguistic utterances, the communication happening in the target domain is vehicled by bodily posture and coordinated movement. What ensues in metaphorical conceptualizations of the tango — \textit{“that dance of entwined limbs in conversation”}\(^{16}\) — is therefore “a dialogue of limbs”: \textit{“a dance of intertwined bodies engaged in a dialogue of limbs, which caress the floor and each other, creating a moving seduction. Tango is language evolved.”} (ibid.) The conceptual metaphor \textit{TANGO IS DIALOGUE} licenses myriad mappings between the two domains, not least between the mediums of expression: language, on the one hand, and an intention-driven interaction of intertwined bodies (“language evolved”), on the other: “The tango is often comparable to \textit{a language with rules, words, well-encoded grammatical forms, from which endless possibilities and combinations are developed, in continuous evolution}. The man shows a choreography, a figure, and he expresses it with his intention, with his body; the woman answers with her personal vibration. That imperceptible instant in which the woman perceives the movement of the partner is the instant in which \textit{the whole conversation is moulded},

\begin{enumerate}
\item Http://www.psychologytomorrowmagazine.com/tango-a-feeling-that-is-danced/.
\item Https://www.opendemocracy.net/transformation/naomi-head/tango-intimate-dance-of-conflict-transformation.
\item Http://www.psychologytomorrowmagazine.com/tango-a-feeling-that-is-danced.
\item \text{German: \textit{Tango-Dialogo. Erotische Zwiegespräche im Tanz}] Sartori & Marra (2004).
\item Http://www.psychologytomorrowmagazine.com/tango-a-feeling-that-is-danced.
\item Http://www.psychologytomorrowmagazine.com/tango-a-feeling-that-is-danced.
\end{enumerate}
the dialogue among the two.” Further mappings may specify the “vocabulary” of the language in accordance with the dance-as-dialogue metaphor: “There is a vocabulary for tango. These ‘elements’ include walks, turns, embellishments, ochos and molinetes. There are steps, patterns, and figures […].” As in verbal dialogue, the communicational exchange is bidirectional and involves listening to the other party: “They say that the secret of the tango is to listen to the body of the other, since every movement of one party reverberates in the body of the other.” As in dialogue, the other party’s input — their movements as expressive metaphorical “utterances” — are taken into account and absorbed by the attentive partner; each movement “reverberates” in the responsive body of the other. The tango-conversation unfolds as a continuous “negotiation” between the two dance partners, however subtle, in a “fluid, interactive loop of communication”: “Fluidity of movement requires negotiation not just between leader and follower or between the masculine and feminine energies of both partners, but between their physicality and their emotions. Individually and together. Movement that is based on this kind of reciprocity creates a fluid, interactive loop of communication, of dialogue, of connection. Language evolved — such is the dance of Tango. Such is the interplay of sexuality and emotions in life — a subtle negotiation between self and other and the possibilities in between.”

It takes two to keep a conversation going, so to speak, and as in any interpersonal interaction, miscommunication can happen. Dancers can be out of sync with each other: “The movement that ensues from this corporeal communication and dialogue can be sweet, passionate, fluid, silky or…not.” When the dance-as-dialogue does not go well, when “the conversation isn’t flowing”, the dance may be experienced


20. ‘Tango, a dialogue that was and will be’ [Spanish: ‘Tango, un diálogo que fue y será’] « Una vez asegurada la conservación de su origen, en diálogo y cruces generacionales, puede abrirse a nuevas experiencias y ampliar la mirada del género, formando parte de un pasado, presente y futuro. Se dice que el secreto del tango es la escucha del cuerpo del otro, pues cada movimiento de uno repercute en el cuerpo del otro. Ese diálogo constante y fluido lo mantiene vivo en la pista. Es el mismo diálogo que entre generaciones y entre locaciones nutren su supervivencia. Es el mismo diálogo que permite que los curiosos y amantes del tango, como los 600 mil que el pasado agosto disfrutaron las actividades del Festival, entren en contacto y alimenten parte de su identidad cultural. » http://www.unitedexplanations.org/2014/09/10/tango-un-dialogo-que-fue-y-sera.


23. Notice that a water metaphor is commonly employed both for dance and conversation, e.g. “fluid” (dance), “flowing” (conversation).
instead as a one-sided “lecture”, a confrontational rather than sensual “argument”, or the dancers may basically be “speaking different languages”. This is how, by contrast to the tango-conversation, one dancer describes her experience of West Coast Swing: “I am also learning Argentine Tango [AT] and finding a much easier time than with WCS [West Coast Swing], despite my limited following experience, and despite AT allegedly being hard to learn. This appears to be because the teacher is all about encouraging us to listen to the music, feel the rhythm, and connect with our emotions and our partner. He describes the dance as a conversation. So far my WCS experiences have been more like a lecture, an argument or maybe two people speaking different languages.”

5. Capoeira: a dialogue of acrobatics
Another type of dance that attracts the conversation frame is the dynamic ritual-game-fight dance, capoeira, of African-Brazilian origin. Both tango and capoeira are improvisational exercises, but the spontaneity and “flow” of the two dances are of a different nature, and the two dances belong to different cognitive-ontological semantic domains. A combination of fighting, spirituality, acrobatic dance and call-response songs in Portuguese commemorating a history of slavery and oppression, capoeira evolved as an Afro-Brazilian martial art, “an art created out of the need for freedom” (Papadopoulos 2012). “Under the mask of a dance, slaves developed a real martial art with music, songs, dances and rituals.” (ibid.) The dance-fight is performed within a circle of people, musicians included, by two capoeiristas who are simultaneously opponents and partners. Various attacks, evasive maneuvers and acrobatics are exchanged “through dialogue, coordination, improvisation and spontaneity” (ibid.). Capoeira is a dance, “not only because it is put to music but because the fighters often perform acrobatic flips, kicks, sweeps and head-butts without touching each other.” It has, for this reason, been characterized as a dialogue of acrobatics. The two players communicate with one another through a “call and response” form of interaction, defensive attacking and counterattacking, timed to fit the rhythm of the instruments playing. According to one capoeira aficionado, the dance therefore lends itself to a description as a dialogue of the moves (of attack and counterattack). (ibid.) There are actually two dialogues taking place at the same time: one occurs between the two dancers, and yet another occurs between the orchestra and the human circle who provide the song and the percussion: “[...] a kind of “call and response” interaction takes place between the

The overall (global) concept of capoeira being a “corporal dialogue between two people” motivates individual (local) linguistic metaphors articulating metaphorical mappings between semantic elements in what semiotic conceptual integration theory has called the presentation and the reference, respectively. When capoeiristas play a “physical dialogue” (de Miranda 2012) in a game (jogo) of capoeira, this metaphorical dialogue thus has “questions” and “responses” and other conversational elements from the presentation space (belonging to the D4 domain) of relevance to what is going on. The dialogue taking place may thus involve “messages” consisting of “words” used more or less “eloquently” to “reply” to a conversational partner: “Every kick, flip or punch, every move you make in capoeira […] is like a word that is part of a message you are trying to communicate to your opponent. The message may be peaceful or violent. Your opponent replies. He may have understood your message and may be willing to become part of an eloquent conversation, where the fighters fly in the air, sweep the ground, and appear at once coordinated and melodious. You can tell a good fighter […] by how many moves he or she knows, by his technique, and by how well he puts all those moves together into a sequence that flows (or how eloquent he is, to pursue the dialogue metaphor). When two talentedfighters face each other, the result is like a beautiful conversation. The fighter who wins is the one who shapes or leads the conversation.” A “reply”, according to the metaphor, corresponds to a physical response: “The objective [of partner exercises] is to generate dialogue so that an initial movement from one person generates a response from his or her partner.” (Miranda 2012)

Ultimately, conversation requires cooperation, and the key factor in cooperative endeavors like conversation (and music) is timing — in essence: achieving synchronicity. For one, a capoeira dancer’s moves need to be synchronized with the moves of the opponent. (Moreover, the moves need to be in synchrony with the musical time of the accompanying percussion.) “The art-form in its essence is about corporal dialogue (establishing communication with another person through movement). However dialogue is a concept that takes many practitioners years to grasp. In classes we guide students through exercises that will facilitate their understanding of dialogue, by working together on reflex and timing, and ultimately playing capoeira with each other.” (emphasis added)

Certain similarities help explain why capoeira attracts the conversation frame. Just as conversation exercises the social intelligence of its participants, the dance "offers actors new possibilities to understand how their body functions in relation to other acting bodies" and offers interactants new possibilities to understand how their mind functions in relation to other interacting minds. Capoeira relies on timing and rhythm, as does conversation, and at the end of the day, this temporal attunement is the very foundation of interpersonal connection. This insight is similarly expressed in a quote from a text explaining the practice of (Amazonian) capoeira in Croatia: “Malandragem is the way one capoeirista tries to trick his opponent into following his lead into a ‘trap’ to conclude the game with a blow or a knock-down. For [this and other] reasons Capoeira is not just a fight or just a dance. […] It is a *dialogue of movement*, a process of outwitting your opponent and a *special way of [connecting] with another person.*”

Though capoeira is a game and serves as training for fighting, it is akin to other forms of dance (and unlike prototypical sports) in that there is no losing party. However, capoeiristas may display their skills with more or less conviction and elegance. In his book on capoeira (2012), D. Papadopoulos describes the superior player (dancer) in terms of his movements being perfectly coordinated with those of his opponent. Both parties are winners, he writes, though one may perform the dance with more soul, bravery or grace. The most important thing is not to break the flow and the rhythm; *coordination* (and hence *timing*) is everything. In addition to succeeding to stay connected to the music and the flow of joint movement, the superior player demonstrates power and might by withholding (potentially deadly) force. Some “utterances” in the acrobatic dialogue are displays showing that he *could* make physical contact and hurt his opponent and *chooses* not to.

These displays are in and of themselves ritualistic, but capoeira also has a *religiously ritualistic* aspect to it and an, in the words of Papadopoulos (2012), “mystical atmosphere”. A game of capoeira includes a possibility for prayer — prayer for protection and to honor forebears. A fatigued dancer may also pray for strength. These practices of religious service are built into the game itself — this spiritual, musical, fight-training game and dance that is capoeira.

Tango, by comparison, does not contain this kind of religious dimension as part of its meaning. Nonetheless, both in the case of tango and of capoeira, the dance embodies a kind of secular spirituality from the dancers connecting mentally and corporeally with one another.

All similarities and differences considered, the conceptual metaphors TANGO IS DIALOGUE and CAPOEIRA IS DIALOGUE evidently engage different target domains. The conceptual metaphor examined, DANCE IS DIALOGUE, therefore turns out to encompass sub-varieties of conceptual metaphors activating different

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34. Miranda (2012).
target domains — at least three variations exist (D6, D7, D9), maybe more (exactly how many possible domain variations of dance there are is in effect an open, empirical question). In the case of the tango, the romantic dialogue unfolding between the dancers metaphorically connects the source domain of face-to-face communication, D4, to the domain of domestic affiliation (‘love’), D6, the satellite domain composed of D2 and D4. CAPOEIRA IS DIALOGUE, on the other hand, connects D4 to D7 (composed of D1 and D4), the domain of worship, warfare, battle and sports. The rituals of sports and dance have historically been associated with religious service. Anthropologically it was part of Aztec civilization, for instance, to arrange sporting events where the ultimate winner would sacrifice their life to the deity (later, it would instead be the loser offering himself up as human sacrifice). The semiotic structure of this exchange persists in modern civilizations: the gods speak to humans through the events of the sports game, or the battle. The humans, in turn, appease the gods through rituals of appreciation and prayer — before, during and/or after the battle or the game. Music and dance typically accompany the service and quite possibly originate in the D7 domain, combining the physical locomotion of D1 (hence: tempo)37 with the symbolic communication (speech, music) of D4 (hence: turn-taking). The combination of stylized battle, (war) dance and ritualization historically make capoeira a D7 activity, which in its contemporary form — having developed from the period of slavery, through the period of being an underground phenomenon, to the period of the academies — may be expanding into the higher-up domain of aesthetics, D9, being performed on stage, much like a ballet.39

Interestingly, the direction of the target and source domains in the DANCE IS DIALOGUE metaphor we have discussed in these last two sections are in other discourse contexts reversed: DIALOGUE IS DANCE. The metaphoric source-target relation can go in both directions. The directionality of the dance-as-dialogue metaphor, from the D4 domain to the domain(s) of dance, can in other contexts be inversed, thus going from higher-up (more “abstract”) tiers to the D4 domain at the most basic level of the four (more “concrete”) domains.

Instances of an inverse source-target structure have been observed both for capoeira and for the tango. In an essay by J. MacLennan, tellingly entitled “‘To Build a Beautiful Dialogue’: Capoeira as Contradiction” (2011), the author examines capoeira as a metaphor for dialogue, a metaphor that “goes beyond mere talking-and-listening conceptions of dialogue” to capture how contradiction can create connection:

36. The trance dance rituals of the Kalahari bushmen are an apt example.
If it is to be considered a martial art, then it is unique among these arts because of its blend of music, rhythm, and acrobatics as a way of self-defense, creating a fluid fusion of movement that is as artistic as it is agonistic. Because of its fluid nature, a practitioner is able to make it what is desired: A fighter will perceive the defensive aspects, a dancer will perceive the rhythm, an acrobat will perceive the artistry. In this analysis, capoeira is perceived as an in-action metaphor for dialogue, one that goes beyond mere talking-and-listening conceptions of dialogue to capture how contradiction can create connection, thus revealing the dissonance often prevalent in attempts at dialogue across difference. (MacLennan 2011, p. 147)

Similarly — by analogy to the DIALOGUE IS CAPOEIRA metaphor — we find examples of the “perfect communication” of tango being utilized as a source domain in a DIALOGUE IS TANGO metaphor. In “Tango: the intimate dance of conflict transformation” by N. Head (2013), which aims to “transform political conflicts into opportunities for cooperative communication”, the author speaks of “the complex dance of relationships which embraces friends and enemies alike” and remarks that, like tango, conflict transformation remains an intimate affair requiring mutual trust between strangers: “[…] tango is an improvised dance that is built around the quality of the embrace and the willingness of each dancer to share themselves and their passion with the other. Both must give themselves up to the music without any desire for control, and without judgement, resentment or criticism. This is what feeds the circularity of trust, empathy, and dialogue which exists between the dancers.”

6. Concluding remarks

As confirmed by the findings above, conceptual metaphor is multidirectional rather than unidirectional; some conceptual metaphors exist in reverse form, depending on what the enunciator wishes to communicate; that is, the source and the target domains can be reversed, depending on the surrounding context of discourse. We thus saw examples of metaphors reversing the structure of the examined conceptual metaphor DANCE IS DIALOGUE: (1) DIALOGUE IS CAPOEIRA, and (2) DIALOGUE IS TANGO, as well as the alternative to ARGUMENT IS WAR suggested in Lakoff & Johnson (1980), (3) ARGUMENT IS DANCE (argument being a subscript of the conversation frame, that is, the script for conducting a conversation).

Metaphors can sometimes go in both directions, but in both directions of what? The theory of semantic domains, first introduced by Sweetser and further
developed by P.A. Brandt, offers an intelligible explanation to the question; as already stated by Lakoff and Johnson in their pioneering work on metaphor some 35 years ago, metaphor is characterized by a domain difference (a difference between source and target domains), and an explanation in terms of semantic domains provides a plausible and coherent reinterpretation of what it means for the source (dialogue) and the target (dance) to belong to two different “ranges of experience”, two different “domains”, to be “two different kinds of things” (Lakoff & Johnson 1980).

According to my analysis of dialogue metaphors for dance, we arrive at the understanding that the script for turn-taking dialogue, from the D4 domain of face-to-face communication, can be employed metaphorically to say something about various forms of dance: the tango (belonging to D6), capoeira (D7), the ballet (D9). As previously stated, DANCE IS DIALOGUE therefore turns out to encompass sub-varieties of conceptual metaphors activating different target domains.

A prediction following from this is that if a linguistic expression connects (by a copula or some other syntactic or lexical device) two items from the same domain, it is not a metaphor (examples: “This doctor is a medical intern” or “This butcher is a gastronome”).

Though not all metaphors adhere to the A IS B format, as evidenced by the findings made in Conceptual Integration Theory (cf. Fauconnier & Turner 2002, Brandt & Brandt 2005, Brandt [2010] 2013b) — that is, not all metaphors are
derived from conceptual metaphor, “This surgeon is a butcher” being one example — it is important to recognize the difference between conceptual metaphor and individual metaphors *i.e.* between permanent conceptual connections and linguistic manifestations of the conceptual metaphor in question (examples from the data presented above: the use of the words *negotiate, vocabulary, message, reply, eloquence,* etc. to describe dance phenomena that are not in themselves verbal by nature). Conceptual metaphor is the *conceptual* basis for individual metaphors manifested in *discourse.*

What motivates the use of a particular metaphor is *relevance* (cf. Brandt & Brandt 2005, L. Brandt 2013b: Ch. 3) and, as initially stated in this paper, for some metaphors, a structural similarity between the source and the target (or, in semiotic terms, the Presentation and the Reference). In the case of the metaphorical conceptualization of dance as dialogue, the common factor is *coordinated communicative behavior* guided by *attunement* and *rhythm.* At the core of the metaphor is recognition of an interpersonal connection that is as much bodily as it is mental: borrowing a way of phrasing it from one of the above descriptions of capoeira, dance, as dialogue, is *a special way of connecting with another person.*

**Bibliographical References**


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